DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 448 335 CE 081 115

AUTHOR	Jackson, Ann, Ed.; Jones, David, Ed.
TITLE	Researching "Inclusion." Papers from the Annual Conference of the Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults (30th, Nottingham, England, July 3-5, 2000).
INSTITUTION	Standing Conference on Univ. Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults.
ISBN	ISBN-1-85041-091-7
PUB DATE	2000-07-03
NOTE	303p.
AVAILABLE FROM	SCUTREA, Pilgrim College, Fydell House, South Square, Boston, Lincolnshire, United Kingdom PE21 6HU (18 British pounds). For full text: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/adcom/beia.htm.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Proceedings (021)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC13 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Access to Education; Accountability; Accreditation (Institutions); Admission Criteria; Adult Education; Adult Educators; *Adult Learning; Articulation (Education); Case Studies; Citizenship Education; Classroom Techniques; Computer Uses in Education; Continuing Education; Cultural Differences; Cultural Pluralism; Curriculum Development; Developed Nations; Developing Nations; Disabilities; Distance Education; Education Work Relationship; Educational Administration; Educational Environment; Educational Needs; Educational Research; Educational Technology; Enrollment Trends; *Equal Education; Experiential Learning; Foreign Countries; *Inclusive Schools; Information Technology; Instructional Design; Learning Theories; *Lifelong Learning; Mainstreaming; Needs Assessment; Nonformal Education; Nontraditional Students; Older Adults; Open Education; Open Universities; Parent Participation; Part Time Faculty; Partnerships in Education; Policy Formation; Postsecondary Education; Prior Learning; Program Administration; Relevance (Education); *Social Integration; Special Needs Students; Staff Development; Teaching Methods; Technical Institutes; Theory Practice Relationship; Transformative Learning; Transitional Programs; Universities
IDENTIFIERS	Australia; Castells (Manuel); Japan; *Marginalized Groups; Mezirow (Jack); Social Participation; Social Partners (European Community); Social Power; South Africa; Taiwan; United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This document contains 43 papers from a conference on researching inclusion. The following are among the papers included: "Include Me Out: Critique and Contradiction in Thinking about Social Exclusion and Lifelong Learning" (Paul Armstrong); "The Linking of Work and Education To Enable Social Inclusion" (Dave Beck); "Including Citizenship in the Adult Curriculum" (Roseanne Benn); "Researching 'Inclusion': Reality and Rhetoric; It's All in the Curriculum Approach" (Darol Cavanagh); "Flexibility and Inclusion in Lifelong Learning: Working the Discourses in Further Education"

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(Julia Clarke, Richard Edwards); "Researching Inclusion: The Development of Adult Education for Women" (Janet Coles); "Peripheral Vision: Staff Development and Part-Time Tutors in Adult Education" (Derek Cox); "Valuing Exclusive Educational Provision for Disabled Adults" (Mark Dale); "Without and Within: Inclusion, Identity and Continuing Education in a New Wales" (Ian Davidson, Brec'hed Piette); "Adding Life to Your Years: Transformative Learning for Older People at the Irish Museum of Modern Art" (Ted Fleming); "The Network Society and Lifelong Learning--The Work of Manuel Castells and Theories of Adult Education" (Nick Frost); "An Inclusive MBA? Researching Curriculum Design and Delivery" (Roger Hall, Caroline Rowland); "Including the Excluding Image: Researching and Teaching Cultural Images of Adult Educators" (Ann Harris, Christine Jarvis); "Re-Visioning the Boundaries of Learning Theory in the Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)" (Judy Harris); "Reducing Exclusion--Introducing Choice: The Introduction of Distance Learning into Taught Courses" (Christine Hibbert); "Accountability, Audit and Exclusion in Further and Higher Education" (Phil Hodkinson, Martin Bloomer); "Voices from the Community: The Challenge of Creating a Culturally Relevant Curriculum and Inclusive Learning Environment" (Ann-Marie Houghton, Helen Ali); "Opening Pathways to Inclusion: The Importance of Non-Accredited Learning in the Lives of Students in the Local Authority Sector" (Ann Jackson, Belinda Whitwell); "Education in a Uniting Society?" (Nick Small); "'We're Not the Only Ones Learning Here'--An Investigation of Co-Tutoring and the Dynamics of Power within a Class of Adult Dyslexics" (Barbara Taylor); and "Including Mezirow's Concept of Perspective Transformation in the Study of Adult Education" (Miho Tokiwa-Fuse). Many papers contain substantial bibliographies. (MN)

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RESEARCHING 'INCLUSION'

Papers from the 30th annual conference of the Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults.
3rd to 5th July, 2000, University of Nottingham

Edited by

Ann Jackson and David Jones

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SCUTREA
Standing Conference
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of Adults

Published by the Continuing Education Press, University of Nottingham in conjunction with SCUTREA.

CE 081 115

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Published by the Continuing Education Press, University of Nottingham in conjunction with SCUTREA

Printed by L. J. Ruskin and Son, Sibsey Lane, Boston.

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ISBN 1 85041 091 7

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Researching 'Inclusion'

SCUTREA Annual Conference, 3rd to 5th July 2000
University of Nottingham

Edited by

Ann Jackson,
East Riding of Yorkshire, Community Education.

David Jones,
School of Continuing Education, University of Nottingham.

SCUTREA
Standing Conference
on University Teaching
and Research in the
Education
of Adults

Published by the School of Continuing Education, University of Nottingham.

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Researching 'Inclusion'

Introduction
The theme of the year 2000 conference is Researching 'Inclusion'. The theme is intended to mirror current concerns about social exclusion, but, as a theme for our conference, we want to broaden the way in which the term might be used. It is intended to refer, not only to participants (or non-participants) in adult education activities, but also to those subjects and activities that might be included in an adult education curriculum. Additionally, we want the term to refer to those theoretical frameworks that we use to explain the processes involved in the education of adults.

The papers included here therefore will address one of the following categories.

Researching the constituency for adult education.

This could apply to research about students, teachers, organisers, funders or any group who might be considered to be included in that constituency. Additionally, we have included contributions that are concerned with research about those who are currently excluded from participation, for whatever reason, as well as contributions relating to the research of policy in respect of inclusion/exclusion. Within this broad category there are also papers which address theoretical and conceptual issues as well as reports of empirical research projects. What characterises this category is that it is about people; it is about those people who are actors in the story of adult education as well as about those excluded from this narrative.

Researching what is included in the adult curriculum.

This category is not only concerned with the range of subjects and activities which are considered as being included in the adult curriculum but, additionally, with teaching and learning methods and with the organisation and delivery of that curriculum. The category addresses the ongoing debate about what learning or development is considered to be appropriate for adult participants.

Researching the theory.

In this section we are concerned with those theories which we include in our study of adult education. We invited contributors to consider what theories from, say, management, psychology or genetics offer researchers in the education of adults. Are there any theoretical frameworks that cannot or should not be included; theories which are felt to be inappropriate to the study of adult education? Can we develop other theoretical models from our research in the education of adults? We were pleased to receive a fair number of papers which addressed theoretical issues, particularly those which grapple with ideas of social control and those which discuss the ethics which underpin the idea of social inclusion.

Although the focus of the papers in these proceedings is diverse, a robust collective voice comes through which indicates the continuing concern of adult educators with those who are marginalised and an indignation at the subverting of the language of emancipation and liberation into a reality of continuing inequity and coercion.

Following this introduction there are abstracts for all the papers which are presented in alphabetical order of the author; the first author if there are more than one.

The papers themselves are then presented in alphabetical order in the same sequence as the abstracts.

Ann Jackson, David Jones.

Tobermory, June 2000.

Abstracts

Include me out: critique and contradiction in thinking about social exclusion and lifelong learning

Paul Armstrong, Birkbeck College, University of London, UK

This paper treats the notion of social inclusion as problematic and, drawing on examples from Britain and elsewhere, critically examines the contradictions inherent in lifelong learning being used as a key tool in the policy of 'joined up thinking for joined up solutions' to the 'problem' of social exclusion.

The linking of work and education to enable social inclusion

Dave Beck

This paper explores an approach to social inclusion, which combines work experience and University level education as operated by Govan Community Development Training in partnership with the University of Glasgow in a working class area of Glasgow.

It considers the role of education in creating a cultural project, which in turn produces learners who are critically aware and therefore more able to have genuine social inclusion.

Including citizenship in the adult curriculum

Roseanne Benn, University of Exeter.

The paper identifies certain abilities that are required for citizenship and through an analysis of a survey of adult students, endeavours to shed light on where citizenship skills are learnt in British society. It argues that the skills of citizenship can be seen as fundamental transferable skills and suggests that these skills can be learnt in any adult classroom. They will then be available to the learner to be utilised in other situations if considered by the learner to be desirable and/or appropriate.

Researching 'inclusion': reality and rhetoric; it's all in the curriculum approach.

Darol Cavanagh, Northern Territory University, Australia.

This paper argues that the notion of inclusiveness is a function of the curriculum approach adopted. It looks at the assumptional bases of the four generic curriculum approaches; the discipline centred approach, the broad fields approach, the community/social functions approach and the individual centred approach and identifies areas where inclusiveness is at risk.

Flexibility and inclusion in lifelong learning: working the discourses in further education

Julia Clarke and Richard Edwards, Open University, UK

In our account of researching the concept of flexibility in the context of UK further education, we present extracts from interview data and discuss approaches to interpretation and analysis.

Researching inclusion: the development of adult education for women

Janet Coles

During the inter-war years, research was carried out into the inclusion of working-class women in adult education. This paper will look at the findings and at more recent research to establish how much change there has been in the intervening years.

Peripheral Vision: staff development and part-time tutors in adult education

Derek Cox, University of Nottingham

Part-time tutors are vital to much adult education, but for long they have been treated as peripheral actors in much of the sector.This paper will examine the emerging recognition that continuing education institutions have a responsibility to consider the staff development needs of part-time tutors, and look at how a package of staff development measures might be constructed.

FE and Social Inclusion: Understanding the Processes of Participation

Beth Crossan, John Field, Jim Gallacher and Barbara Merrill

This paper uses life stories of learners/non-learners to understand the processes of participation/ non-participation in FE. It focuses on people on the margins of society. In looking at the processes through narratives we explore the concepts of learner identity and learning career and what these mean in relation to the learners' self-perceptions and in relation to social inclusion.

Participation and inclusion: opening up a discourse of diminishing returns

Jim Crowther, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

The 'learning divide' between the usual suspects who participate and those who do not is strikingly consistent. The purpose of this paper is to argue for a more 'inclusive' way of thinking about participation that draws on insights from the radical tradition in education.

Valuing exclusive educational provision for disabled adults

Mark Dale, University of Nottingham

"Inclusive education" has become an international rallying cry for educators concerned with issues of human rights and equality of opportunity. I argue that there are some circumstances where unproblematic inclusion acts to the disadvantage of the learner, suggesting the alternative paradigm of exclusive education.

Without and within: inclusion, identity and continuing education in a new Wales.

Ian Davidson and Brec'hed Piette, University of Wales Bangor, Wales

In this paper we develop ideas about identity and inclusion within the context of post-assembly Wales. Through gathering students' views, we describe the way in which involvement in adult and continuing education might affect an individual's sense of personal, cultural and national identity and feelings of inclusion.

Inclusion and the Denial of difference in the education of adults

Richard Edwards, Open University, UK, and **Nod Miller**, University of East London, UK

We argue that metaphors of inclusion tend to suggest a process of extending boundaries on a horizontal plane, to render invisible social divisions and stratification, and hence to deny difference and conflict. We suggest a reframing of inclusion within philosophies of difference in order to admit diversity, ambivalence and contradiction.

Adding Life To Your Years: Transformative Learning For Older People At The Irish Museum Of Modern Art.

Ted Fleming, Centre for Adult and Community Education, National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

The paper will outline findings from a research study of work by the Irish Museum of Modern Art with older adults from the local community.

The findings point to increased well-being, prevention of Alzheimer's disease and changes in attitudes, values, identities and relationships in a way that is transformative.

Will adult learning ever be popular?

Keith Forrester and John Payne

In considering participation in lifelong learning, it is necessary to consider the relationship between the particular meanings that participation has in formal education and training provision and the informal meanings which social actors may allocate to their own learning.

The network society and lifelong learning - the work of Manuel Castells and theories of the adult education

Nick Frost, School of Continuing EducationUniversity of Leeds, United Kingdom

This paper outlines the work of the Spanish sociologist, Castells, drawing on his three volume study of the Information Age (Blackwell, 1997, 1998, 1999). The paper works through four key concepts from his work - change, informationalism, identity and globalisation and argues that these concepts can help us theorise adult education.

An inclusive MBA? Researching curriculum design and delivery.

Roger Hall and Caroline Rowland

Can MBAs be inclusive? A case study illustrates how problems of access and progression were overcome and identifies some barriers to progress.

Including the excluding image: researching cultural images of adult educators

Ann Harris and Christine Jarvis, University of Huddersfield

This paper considers cultural images of teachers and challenges the way in which effective teaching is constructed within current political discourse and through popular cultural texts. The session will draw upon research with prospective teachers and cultural analysis, and will include exploration of your own cultural perspectives of excluding images.

Re-visioning the boundaries of learning theory in the assessment of prior experiential learning (APEL).

Judy Harris, Open University

Understandings of learning and learning theory within APEL seem to be limited even though fresh approaches have developed elsewhere. This paper undertakes a mapping of learning theory and uses this to re-vision APEL practice. The implications of grounding APEL within situated learning theory are considered in some detail.

Reducing Exclusion – Introducing Choice: The introduction of distance learning into taught courses

Christine Hibbert, The University of Sheffield.

This paper explores the application of a study to discover the perceptions of nurses taking high-level, accredited training courses to the experience of distance learning.

Accountability, audit and exclusion in Further and Higher Education

Phil Hodkinson, University of Leeds, UK and
Martin Bloomer, University of Exeter, UK.

This paper presents research evidence about the complex causes of drop out from Further Education. This indicates that retention and qualification achievement rates are inadequate measures of learning or good quality educational provision. Furthermore, current prominence to such outcome measures seriously undermines parallel moves towards widening participation in lifelong learning.

Voices from the community: the challenge of creating a culturally relevant curriculum and inclusive learning environment.

Ann-Marie Houghton and Helen Ali, Lancaster University, UK

This paper explores the development of a culturally relevant curriculum delivered in a community context. We discuss the challenge of gaining access and responding to local views about educational provision. We evaluate a pilot project where students offered feedback about educational provision to different audiences - university, their local community and other students.

Practitioner research with a difference: widening participation projects

Jane Hoy Faculty of Continuing Education, Birkbeck, University of London
Rajni Kumrai Academic Registry, University of Greenwich
Sue Webb Division of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Sheffield

Purpose: by exploring HEFC project proposals from 3 regions, this paper critically examines the policy context and mainstream discourse of social exclusion and invites participants to review their constructions and position in widening participation activities.

Inadmissible subjects: exploring the relations between management and adult education

Christina Hughes and Malcolm Tight

Institutional and student responses to what is admissible in the curriculum of adult/continuing education are explored using autobiographical and evaluation data relating to a course in human resource development. Responses to the course's location and content illustrate how discourses shape the subject and the subjectivities of those teaching and studying it.

Opening pathways to inclusion: the importance of non-accredited learning in the lives of students in the Local Authority sector.

Ann Jackson and Belinda Whitwell: East Riding of Yorkshire Community Education Service, UK.

This paper explores the reasons why adult learners decide to take up, return to or continue with non-accredited learning. The findings result from a small-scale study carried out within a Local Authority community education setting and highlight the wider benefits of less formal learning.

Education for Inclusion or Imprisoned in the Global Classroom?

Rennie Johnston, University of Southampton, UK

Using a deschooling critique and evidence from the UK Widening Provision programme, this paper identifies some of the dangers of lifelong learning for social inclusion, in particular its implication in new forms of governmentality and surveillance. It moves on to consider the impact, role and potential for social inclusion of two forms of adult learning within civil society: collective learning in popular movements and more individualised informal learning within the wider community.

Partnerships: a common sense approach to inclusion?

Helen MF Jones

Q: Are there many partnerships?
A: Yes, and the number's growing.
Q: Can partnerships work?
A: Possibly.
Q: What do partners say?
A: It's good to be friends.
Q: Is there a model for success?
A: The 'connected partnership' has potential.

Crossing the border

Li-Jiuan Tsay, Ching-Yun Institute of Technology, Taiwan

Since adult education embraces a wide range of learning activities and processes, the issue here is therefore to discuss whether overseas study, if regarded as a learning process, can affect one's social and cultural adaptation.

Collaboration and identity - time to accept the reality?

Simon Lygo-Baker

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of a collaborative learning process, developed with a specific learning community, on the identity of a newly qualified educator. It examines aspects of collaboration and identity and suggests a need to reappraise these to enable greater participation of marginalised groups.

Adult educators in higher education; the paradox of inclusion

Janice Malcolm and Miriam Zukas, University of Leeds

A new specialism - Teaching and Learning in Higher Education – has emerged at a time when there are many more adult students in HE. It is therefore ironic that the literature and practices of this specialism make very little use of adult education research. We contrast HE and AE approaches to teaching and learning and argue for adult education perspectives in this new field..

Re-theorising 'community': towards a dialectical understanding of inclusion.

Ian Martin,University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK.

This paper is derived from attempts to design a curriculum which encourages students to develop a dialectical understanding of the idea of community. It is suggested that this may point to some of the possibilities and problems implicit in the notion of inclusion.

What can we learn from wise fools and sages?

Jane McKie, University of Warwick, UK

My paper begins to explore the ways in which memory and anticipation might relate to notions of wisdom. I outline the complexity and moderation of fools, and suggest correspondence between the clear-sightedness of sages and phenomenological accounts of memory. Both literary figures have something to offer to educational theory and practice.

How the other half lives: A case study of successful and unsuccessful mature applicants in Irish higher education

Mark Murphy, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

The paper compares the characteristics and experiences of successful and unsuccessful mature applicants to UCD. The findings indicate that mature student provision can exclude as much as it combats educational disadvantage, offering a second chance to some mature applicants and a first chance to others.

Promoting the participation of women returners in the workforce: guidelines for the design and delivery of returner courses

Sue Saxby-Smith and Jan Shepherd

'This course has been a life changer for me'. Based upon interviews with women on Return to Work courses in four countries, the paper identifies common elements of effective practice. In addition, we explore some of the methodological and practical issues we encountered in conducting comparative research.

Education in a Uniting Society?

Nick Small, Open University in Yorkshire

The paper looks at historical, and then more recent information suggesting that, traditionally, people in England have not been committed to education. It then moves on to consider recent Government attempts to change the culture of the country to one of 'life-long learning'.

Inclusion and employment: the influence of small and medium-sized enterprises on the learning activities of their employees.

Richard Stevens.

This paper investigates the experience of work and learning in such enterprises, and concentrates upon informal learning. It includes issues such as rewards, training, employability, and job insecurity. It concludes that employment in these firms often constitutes a form of social exclusion in regard to lifelong learning.

'We're not the only ones learning here'-- an investigation of co-tutoring and the dynamics of power within a class of adult dyslexics.

Barbara Taylor

This essay analyses data from both students and tutors to discover how shared responsibility for teaching affects classroom practice and the student group.

Including parents in the constituency for adult education through 'parental involvement programmes': problems and possibilities.

Lyn Tett

This paper argues that adult educators can have a positive effect in helping to enable the hearing of parents' voices in 'parental involvement' programmes. They can also promote social inclusion by using 'the yeast of education' to position parents as active citizens making demands for change.

Including Mezirow's concept of perspective transformation in the study of adult education

Miho Tokiwa-Fusé, Ochanomizu University, Japan

What does Jack Mezirow really mean by 'perspective transformation'? Why is perspective transformation valued? What is the ideal of adults assumed in his theory? This paper attempts a deeper interpretation of Mezirow's concept of perspective transformation, utilising the results of the author's interview with Mezirow.

The contradictions of inclusion and diversity in an emerging nation: the case of South African adult education

John Wallis

The paper addresses the contradictions emerging in the case of South Africa from social policies that stress the value of difference while confronting powerful normative forces emerging from econonmic globalisation. The paper raises questions about whether emerging nations can and ought to seek 'developed' world answers to their problems.

'Dual track' - combining 'inclusive' education for individuals with 'bottom-up' community regeneration initiatives intended to combat social exclusion.

Jane Watts, University of Nottingham, UK

The response to unemployment has been to focus on individuals as lacking in skills. This paper examines a project in which these assumptions were not shared by practitioners who developed an approach - 'dual track', suggesting that meeting the learning and training needs of adults can be combined with the regeneration of communities.

Soul Inclusion: researching spirituality and adult learning

Gillian White, University of Sheffield

Open and inclusive opportunities to explore spirituality are rare yet may be of great value, particularly for people working in palliative care. Three such opportunities plus the key themes emerging from them are described.

Inclusiveness for whom? The relevance of creating a demand for ICT based adult learning

Sara Williams, Neil Selwyn and Stephen Gorard, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, Wales

In the quest to facilitate easier access to lifelong learning for all, policy makers are increasingly turning to information and communications technology. Using early findings from two studies carried out at Cardiff University, this paper will examine the problems inherent in any initiative that attempts to widen participation in adult learning by instituting changes on the *supply side* alone.

Getting in and Getting On: The experiences and outcomes of Access students entering Higher Education, in contrast with students entering with no formal academic qualifications.

David Wray, University of Northumbria. UK.

This paper argues that preparation for HE through approved Access courses are academically advantageous, and provide a head start over those entering HE with no formal academic qualifications. It will also argue that individuals choosing entry through such courses find the application process more stressful than non-standard students.

Include me out: critique and contradiction in thinking about social exclusion and lifelong learning

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Introduction

The twin notions of social exclusion and inclusion have emerged as strong policy-leading concepts to take the world into the new millennium. What is interesting about the concepts is that both are global and consensual. Like the notion of community, ideas of inclusion, cohesion, integration are warm and inviting; whereas social exclusion has negative connotations. But wherever there is a forming degree of consensus, especially on a global scale, there also needs to be critique.

Postmodernism has made us aware of the need to be constantly vigilant about consensus. Modernity began by inviting us to question old values, and critique tradition; yet, to a large extent, the old social order is sustained. Social injustice continues, class differences remain, poverty persists. Reason as emancipation has turned out to be a myth. In conducting a critique to learn the truth through reason, what is worth sustaining is neither truth nor reason, but the critique itself. Truth changes and a reason is but a tool – it is continuous critique that keeps pace with change, diversity, complexity and contradiction.

This paper will critique the notion of social exclusion and inclusion. It will argue that inclusion is not the same as non-exclusion.

'Joined up' strategies for 'joined up' problems

The background to this paper is one in which the British Government are prioritising the reduction or, even more ambitiously, the elimination of social exclusion and increasing social inclusion. The prevailing discourse around social exclusion reflects a set of views about those who are disadvantaged, suffering from poverty, poor housing and health, family breakdown, unemployment, criminal environments, limited life chances, and the barriers that prevent their social integration. Social exclusion is the result of a combination of linked problems and can affect both individuals and communities. The causes are multiple and complex, and therefore need to be tackled in a holistic way, rather than each being seen as separate and unrelated. It requires what the government call 'joined up' solutions. This means that government departments, local authority services, public, private and voluntary health and social care organisations must work together in partnership to tackle social exclusion.

The recognition of social exclusion is by no means new, as Preece's (1999) study shows, through the use of life history interviews with those who have been excluded. The idea has a strong European and global influence. Throughout the 1990s, the European Commission and other bodies including the World Health Organisation, and UNESCO's Management of Social Transformation programme have been built around the idea of reducing social exclusion and increasing social cohesion. In Europe, the member states have been concerned about the impact of persistent poverty and unemployment on individuals, families and communities that experience social exclusion, and the 'resulting risk of social explosion' (see Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 1999). Poverty and exclusion have been seen as the 'inevitable' consequence of economic growth and development. Now, economic growth requires social and cultural regeneration. The European Assembly in its

Recommendation 1355 (1998) asserts that social exclusion 'offends against human dignity and denies people their fundamental human rights' and leads, in conjunction with social and economic instability, to marginalisation and deepening inequalities, which threaten the stability of democracy. In the past, notions of social exclusion have been linked to poverty and unemployment. Successive Tory Governments in Britain had refused to admit that poverty persists in the UK, and consequently there is no official poverty line. However, the New Policy Institute has produced some key indicators of poverty and social exclusion. These include: living in a household where no adults are working; living in households with below half the average income; where there is a lone parent; pupils gaining no GCSE grade C or above; children of divorced parents; births to girls conceiving under-16; and children in young offender institutions.

Poverty has the effect of excluding people from participating fully in society. Living in a disadvantaged area will affect the life chances of its residents. As a result of the widening gap between rich and poor in the UK, many families on low incomes are concentrated in public housing estates, with few options to move on.

But of course the issues are not just to do with poverty and unemployment. A good deal of recent discussion has focused on the fact that some groups are socially excluded through lack of access to information and technology in what is supposedly the Information and Communications Age. Issues still arise for those people with disabilities, those who are older or younger, those in care, those from ethnic minority groups or refugee communities, and those who are gay.

Against this backcloth, the new Labour Government established the Social Exclusion Unit within the Cabinet Office in December 1997. Its remit is to help improve government action to reduce social exclusion by producing 'joined up solutions to joined up problems'. Most of its work is in the form of specific projects (including education, training and lifelong learning) which strategically seek to reduce social exclusion.

Social exclusion as myth

Those of us that make our living from lifelong learning should be grateful that we are now in the mainstream. For many of us this is the first time we have experienced being in 'the right place at the right time'. For twenty years or more, we have been striving to defend the liberal adult education, social purpose tradition against the onslaught of rightwing, market-driven, economic instrumentalism. The restoration of a Labour government on the mandate of 'education, education, education' has given all of us engaged in education and training a sense of significance, and some have responded with vigour (Hammond, 1997; Notley and Jones, 1999).

Even in that context we need to raise critical questions about government education policies and the role of lifelong learning in reducing social exclusion. The emphasis on 'joined up thinking' at least recognises the complexities of social and cultural life, and moves us away from over-simplistic notions about causes of poverty, unemployment, racism and other forms of discrimination. However, to identify education as the key to exclusion policies and their implementation, it may be argued, is akin to previous governments' attribution of 'blame' on teachers and education systems for unemployment and the supposed 'skills shortage'. The direct relationship between education and employment has always been problematic. Whilst there is inevitably some relationship between education and the economy, it has never been a simple causal one. There is a whole range of other variables that enter the equation.

We need to be aware of making over-simplistic assumptions. The previous time there was a strong policy push on education and learning was in the 1960s. Social policy was leaning heavily on education to 'solve' social problems. This was reflected in British educational policies at the time. For example, the Newsom Report (1963) observed that there was considerable 'unrealised talent' among those 'whose potential is masked by inadequate powers of speech and the limitations of home background'. It therefore recommended extending the length of time children spend at school, with a curriculum more relevant for preparation for adult life, including a greater degree of vocationalism. The report adds that 'schools in slums ... require special consideration if they are to have a fair chance of making the best of their pupils'. Schools in these areas needed, it was stated, better quality teachers able to cope with the 'social work' elements of teaching within an environment of poverty, ill-health and delinquency. The Robbins Report (1963) focused on the expansion of the higher education sector and its curricula, sharing the same view that the limitations of educational achievement are not genetic but social. The white paper on the reorganisation of secondary schooling to make it comprehensive was introduced in 1965, to move away from selection and inequality in the existing tripartite structure. The Plowden Report (1967) on primary schooling began by recognising the 'power of the environment on the school and the school upon the environment'. There were 'deprived' neighbourhoods and communities in need of an unequal share of the resources to help them improve – 'educational priority areas'. The Russell Report (1970) recognised that within communities there 'exists en enormous reservoir of human and material resources' and with a 'modest investment' in adult education could 'release these resources ... for the benefit of individuals and good of society'.

It is not the purpose of this paper to undertake a comparison between social and educational policies of the 1960s and those at the end of the century, but it is worth reflecting on the similarity of the underlying values, as reflected in the language of 'deprivation' and 'disadvantage'. Admittedly, 'social exclusion' was not a term to be found at the time but its essential meaning was there in the rhetoric of the policy and government documents. In the late 1990s we have a similar range of reports and white papers, encompassing the need for changes in all stages and phases of education throughout life, from early learning (*Sure Start*) through schools, further education and training (*Learning to Succeed*) and higher education (Dearing Report). Adult education has not been given specific attention, but is included in the broader context of lifelong learning (*The Learning Age*).

By the end of the 1960s sociologists of education, including Basil Bernstein, were concerned about the weight of influence being placed on education. In a seminal article, Bernstein (1970) argued that 'education cannot compensate for society'. The notion of compensatory education was dominant in the United States at the time, with a particular emphasis on extending early years education. Bernstein was aware of Project Headstart, with its large-scale research programme, as well as many other interventionist and enrichment programmes for pre-school children. But the first concern about compensatory education raised by Bernstein was whether the early years are as significant as the policymakers would have us believe. Those engaged in the education of adults are generally optimistic about the benefits of lifelong learning and we would most certainly agree that 'it would be fool hardy indeed to write off the post-seven-years-of-age educational experience as having little influence' (Bernstein, 1970; 345). There was little research evidence that would demonstrate convincingly that early learning is an investment, although long after Bernstein made this point, some of the evidence emanating from Project Headstart, did suggest that pre-school education had some benefits in contributing to the reduction of a range of social and health problems.

Bernstein was worried that idea of compensatory education could not be validly applied to children who have not, in the first place, been offered an adequate education environment. He was also concerned that compensatory education would be diversionary, and deflect attention from the inadequacies of the then current school system.

The same concern can be made about 'social exclusion'. There is an argument that the use of this phrase conceals the underpinning problem of poverty. Through 'joined up solutions', the stress on multi-dimensionality with particular emphasis on learning obscures that for many people deemed to be socially excluded, the fundamental problem is poverty, not education. Inequalities in the job market, not only in terms of getting into the employment market, but getting a well paid job with opportunities for career development, may or may not be a factor of prior achievements in learning, but the determinants of prior achievement include poverty. Given the fixation of the government on integrating the socially excluded into the labour market, will the focus on learning be able to break the 'cycle of exclusion'? Or would an economic solution be both more direct and more likely to succeed? The rhetoric on social exclusion tends to give the impression that it can be 'solved' through improved techniques of governance and service delivery (Willis, 1999). Such a view implicitly denies that exclusion and inequality are generated by the economic mode of production. Bernstein was very concerned that compensatory education reflected a lack in individuals, families, and communities, and not in the social and economic structure itself. This is what he said some 30 years ago:

It follows ... that the school has to compensate for something which is missing in the family, and the children are looked at as deficit systems. If only the parents were interested in the goodies we offer, if only they were like middle-class parents, then we could do our job.' (Bernstein, 1970; 345)

Bernstein stated that 'cultural deprivation' and 'linguistic deprivation' are powerful, but sad, labels:

If children are labelled 'culturally deprived', then it follows that the parents are inadequate; the spontaneous realisations of their culture, its images and symbolic representations, are of reduced value and significance. Teachers will have lower expectations of the children, which the children will undoubtedly fulfil. All that informs the child, that gives meaning and purpose to him (sic) outside of the school, ceases to be valid or accorded significance and opportunity for enhancement within the school'. (Bernstein, 1970; 345)

This reflects the growing interest in what became known as the 'new' sociology of education, as well as capturing the essence of the view being put forward here with regards to the idea of social exclusion. The focus on labelling, and the power of some to create the label, and to make the label stick was an early focus of the neo-Marxist analysis of the role of education in sustaining and reproducing capitalism. Bernstein (1977) went on to analyse education as social and cultural reproduction of capitalism, a theme picked up and developed by a multitude of other Marxist sociologists of education. This theoretical framework would not have allowed 'social exclusion' to deflect attention from its underlying economic basis (Byrne, 1999; Gough and Olofsson eds. 1999). Moreover, the critique of cultural deprivation as a 'myth' is also worth revisiting. Keddie (1973) reminded us that 'one of pervasive uses has been as an explanation of failure at school among children of various ethnic and social class groups', and the very institutionalisation of the concept is itself discriminating and putting people from these communities at a disadvantage. She said that the term obscures the

> *culture these families and their children can be deprived, since no group can be deprived of its own culture. It appears therefore that the term becomes a euphemism for saying that working class and ethnic groups have cultures which are at least dissonant with, if not inferior to, the 'mainstream' culture of the society at large. Culturally deprived children, then, come from homes where mainstream values do not prevail and are therefore less 'educable' than other children.* (Keddie, 1973; 8)

Let's now substitute for 'cultural deprivation', 'social exclusion'. In *The Learning Age* (1998) and the two Fryer Committee Reports (1997, 1999), one of the policy intentions is to create a culture of learning. In the first Fryer Committee Report (1997), the need for a culture change is presented because of a whole range of factors including widening inequalities, increasing poverty and increasing social exclusion and disaffection. In this new culture, lifelong learning will enable 'competing values to be reviewed, their relevance for society today and tomorrow to be assessed and newly emerging values can be transmitted' (Fryer, 1997, para. 2.33). The Committee recognised that 'lifelong learning can change people's lives, even transform them and that promise needs to be encapsulated in a learning culture for all' (para. 3.4), and

A learning culture ... will extend to all kinds and varieties of homes and families, to place of paid employment, to voluntary and community settings, and to the realism of leisure, culture, creation and the arts ... making lifelong learning for all normal ...' (para. 4.4).

What will this learning culture do? It will 'support and promote both individual and collective well being and achievement ... it will foster people's creativity, strengthen citizenship and contribute to economic success of the country as a whole, for business, for communities and for individuals and their families' (para. 4.7). At the same time it will 'challenge prejudice in all its forms, enhance tolerance and underpin the values of a civilised pluralistic and inclusive society', and it will fight 'social exclusion and poverty. It will improve the chances of moving towards greater social cohesion, help to achieve fewer social divisions in our country and foster greater international understanding' (para. 4.8).

In the government's *The Learning Age*, the idea of a culture of learning for all is taken forward. They talk of the need for a 'cultural revolution' - a 'revolution in attitudes'. The government asked the Fryer Committee to examine ways of creating a culture of learning. The Committee recognised that 'culture' is a 'notoriously slippery' concept to define, and took a fairly broad anthropological view, stressing that whilst it is not fixed, it is resistant to change, with deeply rooted customs that are reinforced though habit and conventions. (Fryer, 1999; para. 3.5). The problem is with the resistance to change, and in some cases, learning. The Committee understands that no person who does not want to learn should be made to do so, but they might be stimulated to want to learn, and that learning should be available for those who will benefit from it. They also believe that it is everyone's civic responsibility to continue to learn.

Unfortunately, many of those who could most benefit from lifelong learning in dealing with social change are currently excluded from or unaware of its pleasures and achievements, often lacking the self-confidence or opportunity to get involved. (para. 3.2)

In our country today, far too many people are still locked in a culture that regards lifelong learning as either unnecessary, unappealing, uninteresting or unavailable.

> *Once schooling or immediate post-school education is over, they want nothing more of learning than it should largely leave them alone. (para. 3.6)*

This places them and their concept of social inclusion and exclusion in a contradictory position. But this is by no means the first appearance of this contradiction. It is exactly the same as that experienced in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and at other previous historical moments, including during the nineteenth century, when it was uncertain whether the attainment of education for the masses was a victory for the working classes or the beginning of the end of their class consciousness.

Social inclusion as myth

Before we go too far and end up arguing, as a functionalist might, for the positive benefits of social exclusion and the persistence of inequalities as somehow natural, let us now look critically at the notion of social inclusion. Again, social inclusion with its warm and cosy connotation needs to be subject to critical analysis. Mention of functionalism reminds us that their view of social order depends, in part, on social integration. It is one of Talcott Parsons's functional imperatives that a society must seek integration of individuals, groups and communities if social order is to continue. As such there is an ideological basis to social integration. The vast majority of writings on social inclusion do not question that social cohesion and integration is inherently good. Where does this leave the notion of diversity? Does social integration require homogeneity of cultures, values and beliefs? We have witnessed episodes in history where such logic has led to acts of horror - wars and ethnic cleansing - as one community or one part of society uses its political and military hegemony to impose its ideologies, eliminating those who are not to be included. We are socialised into thinking that reason and democracy are both emancipatory. We know that there are sets of cultural beliefs that would find both reason and democracy as problematic. Through the project of globalisation it is possible that the hegemony of western thought, underpinned by political and economic values (capitalism) will achieve social and cultural integration. But what will happen to cultural diversity? Here is a view from an Iranian studying in Canada:

> *The implications of the history of the project of modernity and its defeat are quite evident for us as Iranians. Our history has shown that regardless of the kind of accepted norm at a given time, we are strongly drawn to homogeneity by means of exclusion and normalisation of diversities and extremely hostile toward recognising the right of what is different.* (Payrow, 1995).

Critical reasoning continuously comes up against contradictions. In one sense, it is possible to argue that there can be no social inclusion unless there is also social exclusion. The elimination of social exclusion as a practical activity is unachievable. There can be no sense of difference in a condition of homogeneity in much the same way that it makes not sense to talk of equality without inequality, normality without a sense of deviance, order without chaos, or education without a sense of what it is to be uneducated. Moreover, seeking to promote social inclusion heightens awareness of difference and social exclusion. An example is the use of information technology to promote social inclusion. This leads to the exacerbation of the exclusion of those who, for one reason or another, do not access IT. In this sense, we need to understand that non-exclusion is not the same as inclusion, and that we must avoid taking away the freedom of those who choose not to be included.

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The linking of work and education to enable social inclusion

Dave Beck

Introduction

This paper explores an approach to social inclusion, which combines work experience and University level education as operated by Govan Community Development Training in partnership with the University of Glasgow. The context of the work is an inner city area of Glasgow which experiences many of the common features of areas of deprivation – high unemployment, low take up of post-compulsory education, poor health and high levels of poverty.

Govan Community Development Training is a voluntary sector organisation that exists to develop community work skills within the local area through linked training and employment programmes.

The project serves the area of Govan, which lies on the banks of the Clyde, on the south side of Glasgow, three miles from the city centre. It is an area that was widely renowned for its shipbuilding industry. At its height at the turn of the century it had a population of 95,000 declining to approximately 25,500 at present. The effects of the decline in the shipbuilding industry and the depopulation of the area have been big factors contributing to the sense of hopelessness and powerlessness within sections of the community.

Govan has many of the problems associated with inner city living: high unemployment levels; high crime; problems of drug and alcohol abuse; and of course poverty, which underpins all of the above.

This innovative project is funded via The Urban Programme and Glasgow Works. The Urban Programme is a short term funding programme administered by the Scottish Office. It supports local regeneration programmes for up to four years. Glasgow Works is an organisation that sets up intermediate labour market projects throughout the city. The intention of these is to enable long term unemployed people to progress into full time permanent employment through a linked programme of work experience and training.

The workers are local people (all of whom have been unemployed for at least a year, and some for several years) who are employed by the project for 1 year. During this time workers study for the Certificate in Community Work at the University of Glasgow, Department of Adult and Continuing Education on a day release basis, spend time working with local placement projects and take up a programme of personal development activities.

Partnership between the university and the voluntary sector

CDT had a very close working relationship with the University of Glasgow, which allowed for a two way influencing of practice. This was made possible by the fact that the project co-ordinator also had the role of internal examiner of the University and that a Senior Lecturer from the University was a member of the project's management committee. Lessons learned through the experience of running the programme with a different client group have been shared through University quality control structures and have influenced subsequent versions of the Certificate course.

The Course provided a focus and a definition to the work element of the programme, which allowed the workers to derive great benefit from what was fairly limited work experience. This was achieved because they had to constantly reflect on their practice within a variety of theoretical frameworks. The assessment methodology specifically looked at practice and how it links to theory. The workers reported that this was one of the things that enabled them to learn.

The Certificate in Community Work was originally devised as an in-service route for unqualified workers to progress to a professional qualification. Through discussion with CDT it was seen that there was an opportunity to develop this provision to include people who had some experience in voluntary community activity but were not in a paid post. This was only possible because CDT offered work based placements three days per week for a year, which were highly structured and closely supervised.

This partnership also enabled access for non-traditional participants to access higher education. This was made possible by the distinctive contributions made by both parties. CDT by its location within the community, both geographically and within community infrastructure, was able to make connections with local people that would have been difficult for an institution like the university. The Department of Adult and Continuing Education within The University Of Glasgow has a long tradition of working with adults and has a learner centred and flexible approach which enabled the group themselves to choose theoretical insights and models which enriched their understanding of their previous experience. This in turn enabled the transition of the learning group – in their words - from non-learners to active thinking people.

Linking of theory and practice

The work element of the programme was very important to the group. It gave the project a sense of maturity and credibility within the community, "we weren't just learning we were doing a real job." It was also easier to say to people "I've got a job" than to say, "I'm going to University" since that wasn't perceived as being as threatening to the culture of non-education that existed within that community.

The work environment gave the opportunity to develop work practices like good attendance and time keeping, which had been to some extent lost in an extended period of unemployment. This in turn led to enhanced confidence and self respect because they no longer had the stigma of unemployment. It gave the opportunity to develop a track record of work and to promote themselves to other potential employers.

The practical issue of having a wage made a huge difference. It provided some power to change - the power of having money and the status of being a worker changed not only them as individuals but also affected family and friends.

The expectations that were placed on them forced them to quickly develop new skills and attitudes. However, the status of "trainee" was also felt by some to be useful; this helped to lessen some of the expectations and allowed them to develop skills and confidence without feeling they were being judged too harshly.

The work allowed them to develop a comprehensive and realistic understanding of their community and how it worked. It also opened them up to the potential they had to change things.

The whole group identified linking theory and practice as a major issue and key to their learning. It was also reported to be an extremely difficult change of thinking to adopt. People took between two and eight months before they felt that they were able to make those links. The assignments helped by forcing them to make specific links between what they were doing and what they had learned. They felt that theory made sense when it was personal, i.e. when they could see it in an approach they themselves had taken. They reported that it was a very affirming experience to read about something they had done and then realise that it made sense in a broader theoretical context.

Being able to talk through practice and academic issues with tutors and colleagues helped to make the connection between theory and practice. This then affirms the social nature of education as discussed in Freirean education (Freire 1970). Some of the group expressed concern about how complex theories were used to describe the work they were engaged in. They perceived that there was a conflict between what they did and how they described it. However after discussion it was felt that the idealistic language and the lofty aims of the community development approach also helped to shape the practice and that without it the chances of doing good work are greatly reduced. For example, the ability to understand youth work as an experiential learning process, allowed them to be clear and intentional in their aims and address issues that would otherwise have been left.

It was felt that an approach to learning that specifically links theory and practice within a groupwork setting was, "the way learning should be". " It was a social process, sometimes you didn't know what you had done until someone else pointed it out to you." Another key to successful integration of theory and practice was the emphasis on process rather than product. This allowed people to develop new approaches to their work even if they had a chance of going wrong. In the end they felt that they learned as much through mistakes as through successes.

Support was seen as one of the project's strengths without which people would not have been successful. The things which made it a success were:

It was friendly
It was thorough and challenging
It broke down the feeling of isolation
It helped them to work out solutions to problems
It was a great sounding board for new ideas
It helped you to identify strengths and weaknesses
It was on tap on their own terms
They didn't feel judged
They were dealt with as individuals
They appreciated the holistic approach i.e. interested in them as people not just workers or learners
They felt that people went out of their way to offer support

There was widespread agreement that part of the reason for the success of the year was the fact that they were producing things, which they could be proud of. This often gave them the motivation to keep going when everything in them wanted to stop. As well as specific projects and provision of community resources the team identified the creation of networks and an approach built on partnerships as their main contribution to the community. Given that the nature of Govan is a fragmented one this is no mean feat.

They felt that they had reinvented themselves as active, thinking, conscious and questioning people and as such had produced alternative role models for their community.

They were well aware of the fact that they had been instrumental in producing Govan Community Development Training as a well-respected organisation, which has also led to a widening of opportunity for people to be involved.

Running parallel to the work experience was the Certificate in Education. The approach of the Certificate course was one, which recognised that theory shapes experience and experience shapes theory. As earlier stated, this was a vital element of the project. Theories do much more than explain social life; they also define the understandings that underpin different forms of social practice and they help to orient us in the social world (Taylor 1985: 108). Without the theoretical input of the project the vast amounts of experience the workers had sometimes made no sense. In one case I asked a young man to describe an example of discrimination he had experienced in his community and he could not. Given that Govan has high levels of deprivation, is very divided along sectarian and territorial lines and has high levels of crime and drug abuse, it seemed clear to me that he must have experienced discrimination in one form or another. It was only when he had some theory of human rights and the structural nature of poverty that he realised that most of his life had been dealing with discrimination. 'The ability to see how theory shapes practice and how practice--the real, changing world--keeps pressing at the boundaries of theory.' (Silver 1992)

Philosophy and methods

In essence CDT was attempting to develop a group of co-investigators who were exploring the issue of community development.

Group sessions would look for generative themes and engage in dialogue on those themes. The generative theme would be any idea or issue about which the group had a critical curiosity which led them to understand themselves and their world better. Dialogue in the Freirean sense happens when two or more people are actively involved in investigating the world. It implies a democratising of learning where everyone is prepared to learn. Even those in the role of teacher must be willing to learn because they do not fully know this or any other subject. Similarly those in the role of learner must also be prepared to teach since they have knowledge and insights that may help someone in the group to understand the issue more deeply.

Through a problem posing approach to the educational exchange, an environment is produced where a critical curiosity can be developed. This in turn produces learners who are able to take control of their own learning and from that greater control over their own lives.

CDT has a Socio-political approach (Ireland 1987). It was set up specifically to address the needs of a particular working class community. To ignore the effects of class on learners would have been to locate the causes of lack of educational attainment within the individual. This would have been an inadequate analysis of how a community like Govan has so few of its adult population involved in education.

Crombie and Harries-Jenkins (1983) analyse Adult Education by considering its impact on social change. There is a continuum which ranges from: programmes which aim to preserve the status quo; programmes which aim for social integration through consensus and cohesion; programmes which seek to contribute to a reform of the social conditions within which they are sited; and finally programmes which aim for social transformation.

In terms of the intention of the project it aimed to achieve social change and was therefore at the social transformation end of the continuum as discussed above. It is underpinned by an understanding that it is the structures of society themselves which produce inequalities and so it is they that have to change. The result of that analysis was to invite workers to reflect on their experience in the light of wider social forces in order to make sense of them. This was done in the context of collective reflection that highlighted the commonality of experience. This then served as a counterpoint to the ideology of the individual that permeates much of our society and is inherent in the capitalist system (Ireland 1987).

However in terms of the outcomes of that process it could be argued that it achieved the aims of an integrationist approach. It is true that people who had been socially excluded from the benefits of work and education had been reintroduced to those benefits through the CDT programme. It is also true that very little on a wider societal level had been changed. And yet I feel that to give people an abbreviated experience of transformed social relationships is the small beginning that is needed, over and over again, if there is to be any real and lasting change within society.

CDT could be thought of as a cultural project.

Culture as a body of learned behaviours common to a given social society acts rather like a template (i.e. it has predictable form and content), shaping behaviour and consciousness from generation to generation (Miraglia 1996 p1).

Within Govan there is a culture of non-education in as much as generation after generation have learned that education is not an option for them after school. Consequently change in this aspect is a cultural change. This process of shaping behaviour and consciousness breaks down into three components (Miraglia 1996 p1).

Firstly, systems of meaning, of which language is primary (Miraglia 1996 p1). CDT acts as a challenge to existing meanings of education, work and to the workers' ideas of themselves. This was a result of the approach to work and learning that clashed with previously held views. These points of disjunction acted as a catalyst for new learning as people struggled with the contradictions between the way they had been treated as learners and workers in past settings and the way they were being treated now.

The second cultural element is ways of organising society, from kinship groups to states and multinational corporations (Miraglia 1996 p1). CDT developed a learning group which gave the workers a new cultural element and which promoted change within them as individuals. On a community level it developed networks of community organisations who informally collaborated on addressing issues within the community.

The final element of this shaping cultural template is the distinctive techniques of the group and its characteristic products (Miraglia 1996 p1). Over the year the workers developed a new range of skills and knowledge that they then used in their work within the community. This resulted in the production of a range of groups, activities and services that had not previously been present within the community. This cast the workers in roles of innovators and people who could come up with solutions to community needs. This was in contrast to the life on the dole with its characteristics of feelings of powerlessness.

The effect of all of these elements was to produce a new mini-culture that existed within the CDT group. This not only changed the behaviour and consciousness of the individuals in the group but also acted as an alternative template, a challenge to the status quo.

The learning group

An emphasis on teamwork and team identity was stressed throughout the project. This led to a strong sense of ownership within the workers. It also led to high levels of peer group support. In terms of learning, a group problem solving approach was developed. This enabled the workers to learn from one another. It gave them opportunities for their assumptions to be challenged and therefore for them to develop new ways of thinking. In a more individualised approach the potential for those shifts in thinking are reduced.

High levels of academic and personal support were also an important element of the programme. The time spent in informal or social contact seems to have developed strong working bonds where thinking and practice can be developed. Here also the holistic nature of the programme is seen. It is clear that the effects of a programme like this are not confined to thinking and work. These changes produce a whole range of changes within families and communities. These can be very positive or very challenging. At times of challenge the close working relationships between workers and project staff seem to have made the difference between people continuing on the programme or buckling under the pressure.

Finally it created a space of resistance (Barr 1999) where their new way of knowing could be authenticated and defended against the community on one side and the purely academic on the other.

Conclusion

This partnership between the University and the voluntary sector points to a way forward if we are to actualise ideals of social inclusion and life long learning. In this example,ease of recruiting non-traditional learners, high retention rates and on-going support for learners intellectually and personally were provided by the voluntary organisation. The University in its turn had a learner centred and flexible approach which enabled the group themselves to choose theoretical insights and models which enriched their understanding of their previous experience.

This enabled a process of social inclusion. The learners were able to engage in the life of society not as silent recipients of charity but as critical, active demanding citizens. Any less an ambition for social inclusion is not empowerment but appeasement and is, I feel, bound to fail in the end.

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Including citizenship in the adult curriculum

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Introduction

The Call for Papers of this conference reflects the current concerns about social exclusion. At present the dominant role of adult education can be seen as satisfying labour market and personal development needs. But there is a third purpose: that of supporting adults in their roles as active citizens. There has always been provision of 'civics' courses, though perhaps relatively few in number in Britain today. However, this paper will argue that the skills of citizenship can be seen as fundamental transferable skills. These include the ability to identify problems, find information and locate issues in a political and social context; develop the sense of worth of the individual through both a knowledge that they have something worthwhile to say and the ability to speak in a way that will be heard; and be able to work effectively in groups to achieve common goals and to be able to deal with difference, diversity and, at times, conflict. This paper suggests that these skills can be learnt in *any* adult classroom. They will then be available to the learner to be utilised in other situations if considered by the learner to be desirable and/or appropriate.

What is active citizenship?

The concept of citizenship has a long history but still remains problematic. Young (unpublished) argues that it can be viewed as a set of ordered relations between people that seeks to avoid the Hobbesian 'state of nature' where life is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'. This perspective depicts a social contract aimed at promoting security and well being within the community and necessarily deals with how individuals ought to act to achieve such an end. It can then be viewed as effective, skilled and knowledgeable public-spirited work to solve common problems (Merrifield 1997). If society requires this of its citizens then it needs to ensure, through one means or another, that they are provided with the opportunities to acquire the requisite skills, abilities and knowledge.

The concept of citizenship underpins that of democracy but, in British society at least, 'citizenship' has until recently been an unfamiliar notion. The Commission on Citizenship (1990) found that the word was not in common use and even when used, it had a diversity of meanings. Crewe and Searing (1996) supported some of the findings of the Commission and found that although the British understand the concept, they do not define themselves as citizens. When they do talk about citizenship, it is in terms of civic engagement i.e. participation in the institutions of civil society. Rather than voting and other forms of electoral participation, the British see citizenship as, for example, working in local voluntary associations. So from a British perspective, citizenship is involvement in social networks, in the groups, organisations and voluntary associations that connect citizens with the life of their communities. Motivations to engage in other aspects of citizenship, such as attention to political and public issues, are reinforced through participation in informal groups and voluntary organisations and engagement in civic and communal activities from good neighbouring to charity giving to more formal socio-political activity.

A reasonably representative definition of citizenship can be taken as how an individual activates him or herself to be able to consciously influence their own situation and the situation of others in a democratic society (Bron 1996). However, definitions of citizenship are very country-dependant. The realm of social activity is unique, but not separate from the activities carried out in the political and economic realms and the relationship among the three defines the unique culture of a society. Pandank (1999) suggests that for Hungarians, for example, civil society means economic autonomy, for Poles, socio-political independence, and for the Czechs, rights in a constitutional state. Merrifield (1997) suggests that the American view is closer to the British, identifying democracy in terms of civic participation which encompasses many kinds of action which in turn require a variety of skills and knowledge. Crewe and Searing (1996) argue that the key components of citizenship are civic engagement and public discourse. The levels of these are low in America and Britain but significantly lower in Britain than in America.

Active citizenship is on the agenda now

It is arguable that the fundamental aim of a democratic society is to enable all citizens to participate as fully as possible in cultural, economic, political and social life and the active engagement of citizens is part of the broader concept of citizenship of ensuring that people can take the project of shaping the future into their own hands. However, there is a growing concern both in Britain under New Labour but also elsewhere in Europe that there is a democratic deficit and a fading of citizenship values and practices (Thorne 1998). This trend is echoed in the US where Schuller (1996) drawing on Putnam's work (1995,1996) notes a decline in most forms of collective political participation and social trust. This has led to calls for an increased emphasis on combating social exclusion and the encouragement of an active and engaged citizenry possessing the skills and confidence to contribute as fully as possible. The 1997 European Commission Report *Learning for active citizenship* focuses on learning for citizenship as one of the key challenges facing the Union in the years to come. The Report argues that having the right to participate is not equivalent to doing so in practice nor being equipped to do so on equal terms. It asserts that active citizenship is being empowered to handle the practice of participatory democracy and so calls for opportunities to learn and practice autonomy, responsibility, co-operation, and creativity and develop a sense of self worth and expertise in confronting and tolerating ambiguities and oppositions.

Issues raised for adult education

But however desirable active citizenship is to leaders throughout Europe or, perhaps more cynically, however universally present the rhetoric of citizenship, many individuals lack relevant information, skills and confidence as well as access to opportunities for participation and engagement. It is necessary, therefore, to identify and develop sites for affective and pragmatic as well as cognitive learning. To do this would not be new. The British Ministry of Education's 1947 further education guide exhorted local authorities to greatly extend educational and social resources which would enable people "to deal competently and democratically with the complex political questions of our time, or to develop those interests and activities which go to the making of a full and satisfying life", thereby "making for individual happiness and ... a civilised community". This very ambitious intention was built on the belief "that, given understanding, the human spirit can rise to the challenge of events". Therefore "the aim of any programme of adult education must be to provide men and women with opportunities for developing a maturity of outlook and judgement, for increasing their sense of responsibility and awareness, for helping them to evolve a philosophy of life, and to develop interests which will enrich their leisure" (Min. of Ed., 1947, pp.32, 44).

Adult education has long claimed that it fulfils the challenge outlined above and has consistently played a part in providing

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education for democracy. However, this assertion needs re-examining as part of the current debate on citizenship. Tailored courses for civic participation can be developed to provide the skills and knowledge required. A consortium of British educational institutions (Thorne 1998) believes that adult education has a role to play in encouraging those who feel excluded from political or civil life to become more active and is consequently developing learning programmes which focus overtly on citizenship and democracy. These include a course on *Thinking about democracy'* and others on topics such as Europe, environmentalism and women's issues.

However, this paper argues that adults are volunteers not conscripts and will enrol in adult education classes, which meet their 'wants', not their 'needs'. Many will not 'want' to attend civics classes. An alternative approach is to see citizenship not as content but as process with the skills of citizenship as fundamentally transferable. These skills can be learnt in any adult classroom then 'transferred' into a more active participation in society.

Abilities required for citizenship

The concept of citizenship is a complex and slippery one and it is appreciated that the abilities which have been identified in this paper as underpinning citizenship are, hopefully, reasonable but of necessity open to improvement. The definition identified previously in this paper (Crewe and Searing (1996)) suggests that good citizenship involves two factors; civic engagement and public discourse. 'Civic activity', 'being an active citizen' or 'civic engagement' refers to participation in any significant way in community or social activities and/or involvement in community or social organisations. 'Public discourse' refers to discussions in private and public settings ranging from casual conversations to serious deliberations on public affairs topics from community concerns to party political matters. Merrifield (1997) suggests that to act as a good citizen, individuals need to be informed (which includes the ability to pose questions, identify problems and find information from a variety of sources); have a voice (which includes both being willing to speak out and having something to say), and work together (which includes learning to participate in groups and deal with difference and conflict). To be a good citizen in the above terms requires an individual to possess certain abilities, confidences and knowledge. Drawing on these and other definitions from the literature, this paper suggests that the following lists of attributes promote active citizenship – having:

1. the ability to
    - negotiate and co-operate with others
    - deal with difference and conflict
    - listen constructively to others
    - obtain information (e.g. from libraries, the Web, authorities, public meetings etc.)
    - voice ideas and opinions.

2. the confidence to
    - be proactive
    - have independent opinions
    - act independently if they think it is right
    - take responsibility
    - assume that their voice will be heard and taken into account.

3. the following knowledge:
    - how society is structured
    - how local government works
    - how national government works
    - the basic ideas of the main political parties

- political philosophies/ideologies.

I agreed with Krajnc (1995) and Crewe and Searing (1996) that these abilities need to be learnt and this learning occurs as the result of the individual using the abilities themselves or experiencing them in others. Similarly, confidence grows through support and encouragement in real life structures. Obviously individuals live very diverse and rich lives and benefit from a great variety of experiences within which these skills and confidences might have been learnt. Nevertheless, there are certain settings that have been experienced by most adults and which were of particularly interest i.e. the family that the individual grew up in; their schooling; their post-school education (if any), their work, their adult education experience; and their involvement (if any) in a civic activity. I wanted to understand the dominant effect of experiences in these settings and whether they enhanced and improved the skills of citizenship, had no effect, or worked negatively against participation.

I also considered that certain knowledges were fundamental to citizenship. The most important are knowledge of how society is structured; how both local and national government work; the basic ideas of the main political parties; and some ideas about political philosophy and/or ideologies. I also wished to explore how important the respondents considered the knowledges listed above were to active citizenship, whether they were commonly held and, if so, where they were acquired.

Discussion

These issues were explored through a survey of adult students which aimed to shed light on where citizenship skills are learnt in British society. However, before summarising the results of this work it is important to note that the respondents came from a very particular segment of society. They were typical university adult education participants: mainly female, mainly 45+, on the whole well educated, and socially active adults with reasonable to good confidence in their abilities and skills of active citizenship. Nevertheless, even for this group there are areas of uncertainty including the ability to deal with difference and conflict, voicing ideas and opinions and lacking in confidence that their voice will be heard or taken into account.

The analysis indicated that the workplace stands out as the social setting where most people gain their skills of citizenship. The school system, for this group at least, has had a largely negative effect with family doing better but not much. Post-school education really only shines at providing the tools to search for information. Civic activity does steadily quite well and is impressive in the obviously difficult area of dealing with conflict. It has an empowering effect in terms of appearing to build up the individual's sense of worth through being recognised by others and taking responsibility and action where necessary. Adult education has nothing to be ashamed of compared to the rest of the settings and indeed does well generally. In particular it increases confidence in how well they themselves are regarded and respected by others. It scores best on the more passive skills. However, it is arguable that a service that prides itself on its contribution to a democratic society might have been expected to score more highly.

The survey indicated that citizenship is underpinned by a knowledge base concerning our societal structures and political systems. However, only just over a half of this fairly privileged group felt that they themselves had this knowledge. It appears that it is acquired, if at all, through experience and informal self-directed learning. The formal education system is not perceived as a major source for this learning.

Lessons for Adult Education

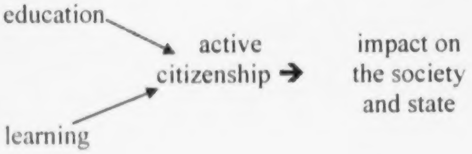
This paper has argued that citizenship needs to be learnt, that it is not only about rights but also about the everyday participation in our society and that this participation is both a measure and a source of society's success. The challenge to our society is to create ways in which citizens can participate fully and effectively in conditions where all who wish can become actively involved, can understand and participate, can influence, persuade, campaign and 'whistleblow' and be involved in decision-making. The challenge for adult educators is to contribute to this vision (Benn 1997).

Thorne (1998) wonders if there is a real link between adult education, democratic participation and active citizenship. This survey indicates that individuals do feel that they gain some of the skills for citizenship through participation in adult education sessions. Rarely, however, do they acquire the requisite knowledge from this site. It would appear, therefore, that there might be a role for a programme of courses on citizenship. It will be interesting to see the success of Thorne's initiative mentioned earlier.

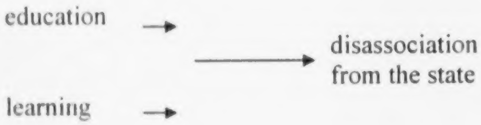
There is, however, a strong caveat to any discussion of adult education's contribution to a more active citizenry. Many social factors such as poverty, ill health, gender, race or age may disadvantage parts of the population and prevent their participation. Structural inequality impedes participation. We have asserted that citizenship has to be learnt. For the young much of their learning takes place in the school. But we have seen the respondents' view of schooling. It is likely that many children are alienated from school by its reflection of middle-class, ethnocentric, gendered curriculum and see citizenship, like adult education, as 'for other people'. Duke (1992) expresses links between education, learning and citizenship in the following rather depressing diagrams. The innocent and hopeful or perhaps gullible view of the link between education, learning and active citizenship is expressed as follows: -

Education → learning → active citizenship → impact on the society and state

The less innocent view below illustrates a more tenuous link between education and learning for many in our society and the institutionalisation of disadvantage. Crudely the top diagram represents the middle classes and the bottom the educational underachievers from other socio-economic and ethnic groups:



and



The commitment of many adult educators to increase the number of people who actively participate in a democratic society is rather stymied when it becomes clear that those who participate in formal adult education are *already* from an active social minority whereas those who do not participate in society are typically non-adult education joiners (Benn 1997, Benn and Fieldhouse 1997). There are no easy answers to this fundamental dilemma. Whilst adult educators can encourage the enhancement of current students' contribution to society, they will not increase active participation in society in any substantive way if participation in provision is not extended.

This work has led to the conclusion that citizenship has to be learned like any other skill but the most effective learning will not take place through the formal curriculum but through positive experiences of participation. Participatory democracy is learned through practice and therefore the adult education experience should itself be an experience of participatory democracy. In this way it can be an affective as well as cognitive learning experience that both citizenship and adult education are 'for us' and not just 'for other people'.

What does seem clear is that if adult education has a serious commitment to its role in developing an active citizenry, then providers might do well to consider their own list of citizenship skills perhaps using the ones given here as a starting point. The curriculum, pedagogy and approach to the programme could then be constructed with the aim of developing these skills. That is not to say that this should take precedence over the 'subject'. If adults come to learn say history or gain a particular qualification, then that should be the prime outcome of the course. It is also important to note that the 1992 Education Act in Britain tightened the purse strings and linked funding primarily to qualifications. In an assessed course, the prescription of the syllabus almost inevitably brings limitations. Nevertheless, within these constraints many adult educators do still have a freedom denied to other parts of the education sector and within that freedom might lie the potential to contribute to a more democratic and inclusive society.

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Researching 'inclusion': reality and rhetoric; it's all in the curriculum approach

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There are several considerations that have to be addressed before I develop the rest of the argument concerning inclusiveness and the rhetoric that goes with it. I intend to define and to develop several key prepositional statements concerning curriculum and to attach these to various models of curriculum. I intend to show that inclusiveness is a muddied concept that has little chance of succeeding within many of the curriculum designs that are practised within the realms of adult and vocational education in universities. On the one hand the literature preaches inclusiveness whilst on the other the real world practises exclusiveness. The key to understanding this concept is to be found in the curriculum approach adopted either explicitly by design or implicitly by belief.

Curriculum definition in adult education and training is rife with definitional problems. Specifically the concept of curriculum is either poorly defined or not defined at all. Curriculum and its defining attributes are taken as a given and educators tend to assume that if there are any problems that these can be discussed and solved by fiat from a chairperson's prerogative. One of the basic problems associated with curriculum theory, design and development is that the defining attributes are assumed. These defining attributes can be deduced from an analysis of various curricula.

A curriculum appears to have five defining attributes: goal directedness, plans and the means to implement these plans, valuing preferences and the allocation of prerogatives to people to make decisions. If this is so, then to leave the curriculum problem to the chair of the curriculum committee to solve via fiat leaves room for much misunderstanding. This misunderstanding can be analysed within a rough mathematical formula, viz. five attributes (a,b,c,d,e) multiplied by the number of people (y) in the committee and all this multiplied by a factor of x where x is the number of combinations and permutations that could be generated by taking non agreement of one attribute and multiplying it by (y) ! To assume curriculum development is a function of the prerogative of the chair of the committee is to generate a failure in the curriculum development process. In practice at this very developmental level the nature of inclusiveness is often subverted.

What is a curriculum?

Curriculum is the planned educative experiences a learner has under the direction of a mentor. The mentor can be an individual or an institution. I suspect that such a definition separates out curriculum from education and training. It enables us to conceptualise curriculum in two dimensions, the package and the idea. It is both a concrete object and an aspiration that embodies a range of intricacies concerning valuing preferences that can be explicit or implicit. The curriculum (package) in fact is a composite of a range of valuing preferences that directly affect the positioning of people and content in the learning process. Curriculum is an embodiment of a philosophical stance within a specific socio political agenda. Within the socio-political dimension is buried an infinite array of other foundational contexts, for example, historical, anthropological, cultural, financial, economic, etc, that impact on the curriculum development process. Thus the training package, the boxed curriculum, contains the goals, means, plans explicitly defined, that will enable the participants at the instructional level to extract the content. What is not as specific and indeed is often implicit in the curriculum development process are the other two attributes, viz. valuing preferences and decision-making prerogatives. At the crucial level of conceptualisation these attributes come into play. They are then enacted explicitly and implicitly though out the development process.

Types of curriculum

From the literature base on curriculum i.e. the writers in the curriculum field, certain curriculum models have been postulated at one time or another. Allowing for some historical licence (manipulation) for example in the late 1800's and middle 1900's John Dewey espoused amongst other things a progressive movement to shift the learner more directly towards centre stage. Such a movement could be seen as a direct response to knowledge base contained in the disciplines of knowledge as espoused by the writings of Brownell and King. Others such as Stratemeyer found discontent with the strict disciplines and the anarchy of the individual and proffered the whole of life concerns as the foundations of curriculum. Havighurst also gleaned from his observations of the adolescent the need to conquer developmental tasks so he developed a set as the guiding principles for curriculum development. Louise Berman wished for a more ephemeral approach with the notions of perceiving, knowing and loving as the guiding concerns that should be in place for curriculum organisation. The current concern internationally with technology and competency based training is yet another desire to impose on the curriculum process an explicit/implicit valuing preference, coming this time from within the ranks of the employer politician rather than the academic educator.

The various defining attributes contained within the curriculum development process (often implicitly) can be adequately explained by selecting four generic curriculum models and subjecting them to scrutiny: the Subject/Discipline Centred Approach, the Broad Fields/Whole of Life Centred Approach, the Community Centred Approach and the Individual/Interest Centred Approach. Each of these generic approaches contains the five defining attributes mentioned above and each of the approaches contain within them the ideas expressed as explicit value preferences or contain implicit values (i.e. not specifically spelled out) that can be deduced by examining the decision making prerogatives, means, plans, and goal statements of the curriculum committee. What are the defining attributes of the various curriculum approaches and what can be deduced from them in terms of the notion of inclusiveness?

Subject/discipline centred approach

Priorities (assumptions)

1. Maintenance of the logical order of the discipline, i.e. its facts, concepts and general principles is the highest good as is the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake.
2. Stress on knowledge for its own intrinsic worth
3. Constraints of limited resources
4. Developmental capabilities of the learner are focussed on intellectual achievement
5. Individual needs and interests of the learner as they align with the discipline

It is fairly obvious when one examines the various assumptional bases for this particular approach that the knowledge that is of most worth is that collected and organised by the professoriat. In order to join in this celebration of content, organised in this particular way, with its own methodology, and ways of posing questions and solving problems one has to have or be in the process of gaining via a long apprenticeship, a qualification that introduces one to such structures. This system requires ridged entry criteria to be met. It requires the participants to be streamed out of the normal bell curve towards a more vertical alignment with the expectation that there will be an elite group of honours students and a massive wastage of the rest. Continual external assessment of the players in terms of the accumulation of content is a requirement of this model. The rewards are vast. Professional associations are formed and entry carefully controlled via accreditation procedures. Thus the professions guard the entry and exit criteria. Exclusiveness is uppermost within this framework. However at the political level it appears as if mastery of some body of content, not necessarily the discipline is the order of the day. Competency training falls under this umbrella. However the umbrella is more like a sieve when it comes to attempting to validate this approach under the discipline approach since competency is only in demonstration not in mastery of the whole. To argue inclusiveness through a marginalised competency is a contradiction in terms. One cannot be inclusive if the attainment of disciplinary purity is available to but a selected few.

The broad fields/whole of life centred approach

Priorities (assumptions)

1. To attain mastery of learning of facts, concepts, principles, theories, enquiry methods and problem solving stategies of knowledge ogranised in broad fields e.g. general science.
2. Maintenance of the logical order of broad fields knowledge
3. Identification of the common learning skills within and between the broad fields
4. Continuous development of generalisable problem solving ability
5. Knowledge is assumed to possess characteristics common to a variety of fields
6. Individual needs and interests of the learner

In order to address the apparent holes in the singular discipline approach but not to the extent of total reorganisation of the discipline base, another approach to curriculum development was born. It was fairly obvious to curriculum developers who were not of the pure discipline that the pure discipline could not answer all the questions posed by society. The Broad Fields approach was born. However, what this approach basically entailed was a combinatory approach to the disciplines in the first instance. An example might suffice. It is apparent that the disciplinary study of geography as the organisation of space is sufficient to arrive at conclusions concerning elevation and housing density as the discipline lends itself to such a study. What is a little more difficult to solve, however, from within the geographical discipline are questions concerning the economic consequences of siting a particular city on a swamp land owned by indigenous people pressing a land claim. The disciplines and their methodology and content base that are needed here are history and economics! Economics can ask and solve the alternative cost structures and opportunity cost of leaving the swamp for a wild life refuge or converting it to waterfront canal settlements. History can validate the land claim. So is born out of necessity the Economic-History or Historical Geography curriculum. Now the difficulty as far as inclusiveness here is concerned is in the ameliorating of the apprenticeship system that would have required two lifetimes to complete. Parts of each discipline are surrendered at the undergraduate level. However now we have two guardians watching the exclusive framework. Each discipline applies its methodology to the problem, in this case of settlement, in the hope of achieving a more robust answer to the question asked which was unanswerable by one discipline alone. Where have all the beaches gone? can now be approached from various disciplined positions, historical, political, financial, geographical, economic, and answers sought from the integrated disciplines and a wider variety of discipline trained exclusive personnel.

The community centred approach

Priorities (assumptional bases)

1. There is no preferred organisation of knowledge and skills. The selection and organsiation of knowledge is dependent on the particular community function or problem under examination. Sometimes this relates to the human condition e.g. health
2.The range of problems in a community is related to the social functions of the community and to solving problems in that community
3. Achieving social membership is the primary educational good (from this flow all the other competencies for living)
4. Developmental capabilities of the learner are related to achieving social functions
5. The best kind of education is social education.

There are still problems that do not appear to be able to be answered within an environment populated by people who are interested in solving community problems. They are interested not in the knowledge base that is contained in the disciplines directly. They are interested in it as it helps to solve problems in the community. These problems may be of a polluted waterway, high unemployment or youth suicides that do not readily fit within the exclusive domain of the discipline or of the broad field approach. It appears from this approach that the discipline and the community of people need to come together, sometimes formulating problems solvable from the discipline, sometimes not. The wishes, aspirations and knowledge base of the lived experience of members of the community come into play as the elders place their lived knowledge alongside the consultant disciplinarian's knowledge so that an amalgam of refined and non-refined knowledge is bought to bear on the problem. The notion of exclusiveness is still fairly apparent as the community institutions are loath to expose themselves too much to random knowledge. To be sure, surveys of inclusiveness are celebrated, these having been designed by the disciplinarian to answer questions that the institution sees as necessary. However still, as with the other two approaches, in answer to the curriculum question what knowledge is of most worth? It is something other than my own.

The individual/interest centred approach

Priorities (assumptional bases)

1. Needs, interests, and abilities of the individual (personal development). Personal development of the learner is the primary educational good
2. Processes of personal interaction (from this flow all other goods e.g. competency)
3. Knowledge has value only as it assists personal development (interaction with the personal and physical environment)
4. Biography is important
5. Societal needs are satisfied as individual needs and well-being are addressed.

The final approach for consideration is one that holds as its ultimate goal the interests, wishes, desires of the individual as the basis for the purest form of curriculum organisation. It is within this frame of reference that there appears to be the best chance of curriculum being inclusive. However, even here there are philosophical problems associated with equalness in inclusiveness. What do we know about learners and how can this be applied to the notion of inclusiveness? Each learner is unique. They learn at differing rates, they scan the knowledge base differently extracting from it those parts that they can incorporate into their learning frame, implicitly rejecting some knowledge as too difficult, too far removed from the immediacy of the problem to be solved, not applicable to their particular stage of intellectual, social, physical, emotional development, boring or at the very least uninteresting and so on. This knowledge about learners under this design must form a critical platform for decisions about the curriculum. Such knowledge must be made explicit and used as the guiding principle for curriculum development. Under the other curriculum approaches the learner is of course in there somewhere but he or she must be subservient to the pure design, almost as an implicit player in the design. Within the person centred design it is obvious that the notion of inclusiveness can be included with a minimum of fuss. Each designed curriculum is based on the needs, interests, desires, and capabilities of the individual learner. Inclusiveness only becomes a problem when the design is extended to encompass group behaviour and when the knowledge base is to be something imposed on the learner within a learning time frame. If we accept that each individual is unique, then the various continuums of academia (gifted-retarded; high achiever-low achiever; bright-dull; literate-illiterate etc) and the organisation of learning into classrooms and the notion of the achievement of competency within a specified time frame pose some problems for this curriculum as well!

The notion of pure curriculum models was adopted so that I could lay bare the underlying parameters of each model in order to attempt to see where inclusiveness sits if at all. It appears that all the pure models have problems, even the much-touted individualised/person centred approach. I suspect that one of the basic reasons for this is that even with such a high sounding ideal within a moderately pluralistic democratic society there are forces at work which militate against this elevation of the individual.

This situation can be best explained by having a look at the antecedents of curriculum development. It becomes apparent when one identifies the antecedents of curriculum development that the curriculum development process is highly political. This is not to say that the sociological, historical, philosophical, economic, psychological antecendents do not have a part to play in the curriculum; they obviously do. These are the areas where we look to develop curriculum documents based on sound learning theory, on sound fiscal management of resources, on historical precedent and innovation, and so on. However, within the western moderately pluralistic representative parliamentary democracy, the populace give up its rights to decide directly on curriculum and entrusts such matters to the political arm of the elected party, the educational or training bureau. To be sure the educational bureau chiefs surround themselves with advisors who keep one eye on their political masters and the other on the combined wisdom emanating from the populace. To get such a balance wrong is to lose one's position of authority within the system. Such advisors, for example, chairs of curriculum committees, ensure the 'proper' filtering system is in place so that the parental constituents, the university lobby, the Examination Boards, the professional associations including teachers and trainers are placated as far as possible whilst still being true to the system that the electorate entrusted to them via the voting system. This is a system that often sees itself as the guardian of standards, at least within the intellectual sphere, and within the disciplines of knowledge to do with a narrow defined literacy usually of language and number. As far as inclusiveness is concerned such a system of competition does not augur well for such a concept.

From the above it appears as if an eclectic model with a bit of each of the models incorporated into the design is the best way to go in terms of inclusiveness. This would allow some of the attributes of each of the Discipline centred, Broad Fields Centred, the Community Centred and Individual Centred approaches to be incorporated in a design to cater to individual needs. Such a collection of mismatches would appear necessary. However one could see the consequences of such a mismatch if through such an eclectic approach, the inappropriate pieces formed the new curriculum design. If atomic physicists and mentally challenged learners are to be collected within the one organisational framework of rigid classes, pre-specified content, highly sophisticated measuring devices (examinations), specific age related time schedules in which learning is to occur, then the notion of inclusiveness would be doomed. It appears that within curriculum development the implicit assumptions concerning the nature of inclusiveness need to be carefully spelled out and aligned with a philosophical approach that moves personal knowledge bases much closer to the foreground than they currently are.

The rhetoric is foregrounding inclusiveness. In my experience within university adult education and training regimes reality is something else. Reality and exclusiveness manifests itself in terms of university policy and its application to recognition of prior learning, advanced standing barriers, work experience and life experience, consecutive and co-requisite subjects, timetables etc etc.. There appears to be something built into the societal psyche that allows verifiable discipline centred knowledge to have a much higher intellectual priority than personal unverifiable knowledge. Not that the personal knowledge is unverifiable, for often much of it is, if the time resource is allocated to finding out the validity. Under the new regime of more open entry to universities such hitherto hidden barriers to entry have been made more transparent within the physical domain. There are actually guidelines to enable coordinators to address the inclusiveness issue and to apply judgements to prior learning. However, at the implicit (intellectual) level it appears as if inclusiveness is associated with individual anarchy. I suspect one could envisage an exclusive university of inclusion with standards based against individual criteria of life experiences and university medals being struck for the best life, with surgeons and dentists and police persons graduating after a random affair with bits of the discipline, broad fields, and community problems but I suspect within the implicit domain the system still has a long way to go.
What is inclusiveness? I suspect that the definition holds the key to the curriculum organisation. If we can define inclusiveness as the right to participate to the fullest extend prepared to be financed by society, then this should enable society to articulate an answer to the question : what knowledge is most worthwhile for its citizens? If and when this is answered, in the best of all possible worlds inclusiveness can be adopted in the first instance in answer to the pedagogical question of how can the knowledge base be organised to be taught, learned and studied regardless of the curriculum approach adopted. At the second level, depending on what society deems as the best answer to the question of what knowledge is of most worth, an eclectic curriculum approach would need to be developed that was true to its assumptional bases that saw individual inclusiveness as its highest priority.

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Flexibility and inclusion in lifelong learning: working the discourses in further education

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In recent policy documents on lifelong learning, the Labour Government in the UK has put forward economic competitiveness, social inclusion and personal development as central to goals of policy (Secretary of State for Education and Employment 1998 and 1999). These provide a rationale for extending learning opportunities to a wider range of participants and throughout the lifespan. It is through the development of a culture of lifelong learning that we will 'learn to succeed' and modernise for a 'new Britain'.

The claims are broad, and questions have been raised about the evidence base for them (Edwards 1999). Does learning contribute to competitiveness and, if so, how and in what ways? How does learning contribute to social inclusiveness? Is the latter achieved through enhanced economic inclusiveness? What is the nature of social inclusivity in contexts of difference and diversity? Does participation in learning opportunities constitute a form of social inclusion or is it simply a means to an end of inclusion? What forms of development are inscribed in different forms of lifelong learning? There has also been concern expressed at the implication of compulsion in lifelong learning – learn or be excluded and it will be your own fault (Tight 1998, Coffield 1999). This is linked to the wider discourse within the government's policies on promoting a 'balance' between rights and responsibilities; insofar as the government makes opportunities available, individuals have a responsibility to take them up – both implicit and explicit carrots and sticks abound.

It is not our concern in this paper to evaluate the evidence and arguments surrounding the government's lifelong learning policies as a whole. For a start, it is too soon to reach conclusions, although critical engagement is certainly necessary and an ongoing feature of current debates. However, this paper is concerned with the inter-relationship between flexibility, lifelong learning and the social inclusion agenda within the context of further education. It arises from a two year pilot study examining the 'working' of flexibility within two case study colleges (see http://soe.open.ac.uk/CEPAM). The paper is in three parts. First, we outline the rationale and methodology for the study. Second, we explain our focus on the discourses at work and working discourses within further education. Third, we present some brief extracts from our interview data and discuss questions of interpretation and analysis. It is important here to state that this paper is a story of 'work in progress' and does not provide a 'full' or 'complete' account of the research processes or findings. We therefore conclude by pointing to the unresolved question of our own different readings and working of the data.

Background: researching flexibility in further education

In a review of strategic research needs in further education in the United Kingdom, Raffe (1996:24) suggested that the pursuit of flexibility may provide a focus for research in the 1990s and beyond as much as the pursuit of equality provided a focus in the 1960s'. He argues that both themes direct our attention to the interfaces between education and the wider social and economic structure. Insofar as policy aims to develop a culture of lifelong learning, then institutions need to become more flexible in order that the interface is more effective and efficient. Through enhanced flexibility, providers of learning opportunities can become more innovative and responsive to 'customers', expanding the range of learning opportunities available.

Weaknesses in some of the equality measures that have been implemented over the past few decades might be attributed to the fact that equality was not adequately conceptualised in relation to notions of diversity and difference (Bock and James, 1992). This provides a rationale for research into the different meanings given to notions of flexibility in the context of further education in the UK, a focal site of current policy implementation. The aims of the research are to pilot a methodology and develop a conceptual analysis of flexibility grounded in an empirical study of the institutional practices within a further education setting. A conceptual framework has been generated from a literature review in which notions of flexibility are located in the socio-economic context of global labour markets. This review also examines the impact of these notions of flexibility on educational organisation and pedagogy (Clarke et al., 2000a)

Flexibility, participation and lifelong learning have become a powerful triumvirate in the government's 'renewal' process – and the emphasis on 'newness' rather than reform can be seen as significant (Edwards 1999). This is the case across post-school education and training provision, but also specifically in relation to further education. Here, flexibility is positioned as inherently worthwhile, enabling the widening of participation and supporting lifelong learning (Edwards 1997). Inflexibility, by contrast, is positioned as a conservative force denying opportunity by placing the interests of the organisation and/or workforce over and above those of the learner/customer. Flexibility includes, inflexibility excludes. This discourse has been deployed both in relation to providers of learning opportunities and the labour market. What is silenced in the process is the question of the effects of different forms of flexibility in relation to who is included into what.

A case study approach was designed to investigate how flexibility was put to work in the context of two colleges, one in a rural setting in east England (R), and the other located in the inner city of a metropolitan area in southern England (U). The purpose of the case studies is to explore how flexibility shapes the 'real world' practices of further education as these are represented in strategic plans, mission statements, college prospectuses and records of student progress, as well as in the self understandings of workers and learners. This paper draws upon the interview material from the two case studies. In the course of the study between July 1999 and January 2000, fifty interviews were conducted with managers, support staff, lecturers and students. Each interview lasted about an hour and was taped and transcribed. For the purposes of this paper we have selected some examples from the preliminary data analysis on which to focus the question: how is flexibility worked in relation to inclusion by people who are working and studying within further education?

Working the discourse

In our exploration of the discourses of flexibility at play within further education, we want to look at the ways in which people take on and use the discourses to achieve particular effects. We also want to look at the ways in which people who are engaged in work or study in an FE college are subject to discourses of flexibility that privilege particular ways of being and acting. Lesley Farrell (1999 and in press) has explored these questions in relation to the impact of globalisation on knowledge and identity in the workplace. Farrell shows how dominant discourses of global quality management serve to undermine and impinge upon local knowledge and individual expertise. Describing workplace educators as 'discourse technologists', Farrell explains how they engage in a form of collusion that involves 'working the discourses' in order to re-articulate and hold on to local workplace values and identities. For our own research, we will also examine the ways in which staff and students 'work the discourses' of flexibility when they talk about their experience of work and study in further education colleges.

With our current focus on inclusion, we also want to explore the idea of the 'spaces of enclosure' (Lankshear et al.1996) of an educational setting. Lankshear, Peters and Knobel argue that education as a modernist institution is characterised by the 'spaces of enclosure' of the book, the classroom and the curriculum. They maintain that developments made possible by the use of ICTs in education work in ways that call these spaces of enclosure into question. These include questioning the underlying assumptions about the fixity and stability of the word, the linear text and the teacher as authoritative bearer of meaning. To what extent are the 'spaces of enclosure' inscribed within the FE college as a physical or metaphorical place?

We are approaching data analysis from different epistemological perspectives, asking what people are talking about and also asking how they both construct and are positioned by the things they say. The transcripts provide us with referential accounts from which the 'content' can be extracted and organised into topics and themes. However, we are also treating them as texts, which can be examined for the work they do in constructing subjects and objects and positioning these in particular relationships within a discourse.

Working the data

Given the argument above that we are examining the working of flexibility in specific contexts, reflexively we have to recognise the workings of our research practices. To do this, rather than present a smooth attempt at a definitive interpretation of the data, we present a series of workings that involve us in taking extracts from the texts of those we interviewed and our written dialogues as to their significance in relation to the themes we identify. As such, we are refusing the closure that is often to be found in research texts and offering the basis for a dialogue to construct further the understanding of what is at play in further education.

Retention or brief encounters

Barney, Curriculum Manager, Business(R): [1]

I do actually run a... flexi-study programme... where students get distance learning material. They only come into college 10 times throughout the year... we get 20 students in each group. Of those 20, 50% are a fee remission so obviously they're single parents whatever, so... it's meeting the inclusivity agenda.... quite clearly the retention is not as we would actually hope it to be... the similar taught programme where they come in every week for five hours a week, the retention there is 90%... the retention on this distance learning programme is 50%.

Richard: Inclusion is not simply into the programme, but through to completion and there is a sense in which the distance form of flexi-study is not entirely successful in extending the space of enclosure of the modern education institution. Attempts to widen participation through particular forms of flexibility inscribe different problematics of exclusion and inclusion.

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[1] Interviews were conducted in two curriculum areas in each college, as well as including staff with cross-college responsibilities. In each college the Access or business curriculum areas include a wide range of courses at very different levels.

Julia: In Barney's account, the flexi study programme is now referred to as *distance learning*, emphasising the location of students at a distance from the college. These students are not described as getting or receiving a fee remission, they are a fee remission. The citing of *single parents* as the obvious example of this group associates them with the problem of retention that Barney goes on to describe. The nominalisation of *retention* reduces the complex processes involved when people join and withdraw from courses to a quantifiable thing. I wonder if there's a Freudian explanation for this focus on retention in current funding regimes, which denies the possibility of valuing brief encounters with educational processes. The experience of Simone (full-time Access student (U)) suggests possibilities for a more inclusive (and flexible) notion of 'retention':

I did enrol for this Fresh Start course a few years back previous and I'd only stayed for one class. I had enjoyed it but something happened in my life... I wasn't ready... So I had a feel of the college in the first instance and I liked it...

For Simone, the memory of a single positive encounter has been 'retained' for several years until she felt ready to take on a longer-term commitment to the institution.

Inclusion at the centre: student demands and the cross college role

Jo, Cross-college manager (R):

...what we've tried to do in developing the study support area... we tried to actually, not only talk to students about their demands but talk to staff in the college about what assumptions they are making about what students bring to courses. And that's quite hard to do but it challenges in a way that I think we've talked about before. But its very frustrating to talk to a student about what they need and to hear her and understand and then be unable to get the college to deliver or to understand what's involved...
And it's always interesting to be offered a new opportunity, so all the widening participation stuff I'm really interested in doing, but where does it fit in with my role as Director of Student Support?

Richard: Jo is positioning the students and their *demands* as central. In placing them in this way, she is in a sense using them as levers against established institutional and attitudinal practices. Staff and the college need to be more responsive – more flexible – to enable participation. There seems to be some dissonance in Jo. In her role as Director of Student Support, she has a particular view of the demands of students, and of the ways in which staff should respond to these. While interested in the *stuff* of widening participation, however, she is unclear of how this relates to her role. This would indicate a clearer focus on supporting those already within the system than on the forms of flexibility needed for responding to demands by different student groups.

Julia: Who's doing what here? Jo, and her colleagues are *developing the study support area...* , talking to students and staff, challenging, hearing, understanding. The objects of all this activity are *students, staff* and *the college*, together with *demands, assumptions* and *what they need* or *what's involved*. Looked at in this way, perhaps the central problem is Jo's job, getting people to understand *what's* *involved* in the *study support area*, rather than student *demands*. This reading would be congruent with Jo's reference to *widening participation* as a problem in relation to the definition of her job role.

Richard's interpretation of Jo's attitude towards student demands is informed by an issue that we address in the literature review and conceptual framework within which our interview questions were devised (Clarke et al 2000). There we cite Thomas (1995), who cautions that when professionals claim to represent the interests of the learner, this often functions to constrain choice and opportunities for learners to represent themselves. We go on to point out that many different categories of staff may seek to represent the 'needs' and/or 'interests' of students as part of a strategy to give greater legitimacy to their position, and we conclude that this is part of the politics of institutional life. Julia's interpretation draws on a functional linguistic approach to argue that the students are not positioned at the centre in Jo's account since they are not the subjects of any main verbs. The phrases *what students bring to courses* and *what they need* are buried in subordinate clauses as indirect objects of Jo's concern. Thus where Richard sees dissonance, Julia sees consistency in Jo's misgivings about the implications for her job role if she were to engage in the *stuff* of widening participation.

George, full time student, Business, (R):

the [teachers] I've had are very good and they're very sort of helpful and friendly and flexible... and... bend over backwards to help you out.

Richard: In contrast with Jo's observation, George seems to position the lecturing staff as responsive and flexible. However, he is also positioning himself as Jo positioned students – making demands upon staff. As a full time member of the student body George is firmly located as a participant within the spaces of enclosure.

Julia: Yes – students will make different kinds of 'demands' and some will be more able to articulate these than the students with 'support needs' who Jo was concerned with.

Inflexible spaces: inclusion and overcrowding

Emma, Part time lecturer, Business (R):

I teach such a variety of groups that it is different wherever you go. I teach supported learning students so that's students who come with learning difficulties... The group at present I believe is too big with too little support.

Richard: Emma, as part time lecturer, may well be constituted as a flexible member of staff, at least in terms of contract of employment. Emma indicates her concern that the effects of inclusion have been increasing class sizes with too little student support. Whether varying her teaching approaches is a flexible response to this situation or whether it undermines such flexibility is unclear, although later in her interview we find '... give me the resources to enable me to teach, not to child-mind'.

Julia: The label 'supported learning students' suggests a positive strategy for inclusion but takes an ironic turn when the students are not actually provided with the support they are deemed to need.

Mary, part time student, Access(R):

... we came here to do stage two and we all said we'd rather do it at K, a community centre, an out-building so they must pay... There's parking on site and we did enjoy doing it there. Coming here you have to pay for parking... The room we were given on the fifth floor is the pits.

Richard: Mary is here identifying the negative impact of a physical form of inclusion for those who are participating. There is also a sense in which the flexibilities being developed in Rural College revolve around greater use of their own buildings and distance learning approaches.

Julia: Yes, and looking at the data as a whole, it seems that students are generally happy about the quality of teaching and personal support, but their main source of complaint is about physical space and overstretched support services. For example, Paula (Full-time student, Access (U)), explains that the crèche in their building closes at lunch time:

...now this is an Access course for mature students that are likely to have children and it's lovely that they have got a nursery because that's... a step in the right direction, but there is little things that is not quite flexible enough you know. For instance, I spoke to one woman in the canteen today... she gets up at five o'clock in the morning to do work before she comes to college. Now having her child in the afternoon is a restriction... she could use the library in that hour, or half hour, you know

Paula uses flexibility here as a measure against which to judge the adequacy of the crèche facility. Working the discourse of flexibility in this way might provide a tool for persuading management to address shortcomings in the implementation of their inclusiveness agenda. The resource and staffing implications of this demand for greater flexibility take us back to the concerns of the cross college manager about what is to be included in her job role. But there, of course, we did not agree on what Jo was actually saying about the problem of *student demands*. Thus we are ourselves involved in a working of the discourses at work in further education contexts, reflexively engaged in the textual practices of research and the identification of research as written rather than reported (Game 1991, Clarke, et al 2000b).

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Researching Inclusion: The development of adult education for women

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Introduction

The issue of social exclusion is not a new one, but one which adult education has attempted to address in various ways throughout the twentieth century. In order to raise participation in adult education by a particular group to an acceptable level, it is necessary first to identify any existing obstructions.

During the inter-war years, research was carried out by a Board of Education Committee into the inclusion of working-class women in adult education. This paper will look at the Committee's findings which were published in the report, *The Development of Adult Education for Women* in 1922. (Board of Education 1922) It will then look at more recent research and try to establish how much change there has been in the intervening years.

The Committee had no doubt to cope with the same problems in their research into the participation by, and inclusion of, women in education as have been encountered ever since. Factors such as poor literacy skills or financial hardship may well have deterred would-be students throughout the twentieth century but pride and self-esteem have caused these reasons to be concealed. There have been problems too over definition, in particular of the terms 'learning' and 'education'; these have been tackled in different ways in later research.

The 1922 report

The Board of Education Adult Education Committee was set up in 1921 with the express purpose of promoting the development of liberal education for adults. During the inter-war years it carried out research into various aspects of adult education and made recommendations according to its findings. The Board of Education, for various reasons, placed great faith in the concept of the tutorial class system, by which Committees organised jointly by the universities, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and other bodies provided classes throughout Britain. Because of the Board's attitude, strengthened by its belief that the WEA connection provided a suitable link to working class students, it was inevitable that their research into women's education should concentrate on this type of education, however inappropriate some might have considered it to be. Other types of education, such as that provided by the Women's Institutes, received much less attention.

The Board of Education Committee consisted of thirty-one members, of whom only three were women: Grace Hadow of the Women's Institute movement, Phoebe Walters of Hillcroft College and Lady Mabel Smith. It could be argued that on an issue such as this, extra women might have been coopted on to the Committee but this did not occur.

The Committee reported at length on the barriers encountered by women students participating in education. Though the problems were closely linked to each other, they can be divided into three main sections: problems at home, problems in the classroom and organisational barriers.

The 1920s: domestic problems

Sympathy was expressed by the Committee about the domestic problems women students faced. Tutorial classes were normally held in the evening,

> *a very difficult time for the mothers of young children ... even where the children are sufficiently old to permit of attendance at evening classes on the part of the mother, the latter is generally too tired, after an exhausting day's toil, to take real interest in the work of the class.*

The report added, surprisingly perhaps,

> *More often than not her daily work involves greater nervous strain, if not physical effort, than that of her husband ... If she makes an effort to attend the meetings of the class her brain may be asleep.*

Furthermore, the opportunities for reading and essay writing were far more restricted than for men. The Committee argued too that the reluctance of women to join tutorial classes was partly due to the necessity of undertaking three year's work; which 'in the case of women whose domestic circumstances may be materially altered in the meantime, is a relatively longer period than in the case of men.'

The report also pointed out that only very few wives of men students attended classes with their husbands and the view was expressed that 'the isolation of the wife has not been conducive to domestic happiness.' Difficulties could arise in homes where the man had had more educational advantages and there was a lack of common interest. No doubt difficulties could also have arisen in homes where the woman had the educational advantage and it is tempting to think that in this situation the problems would have been more pronounced.

The role played by the man in encouraging or dissuading his wife from attending classes was obviously of vital importance in working-class families in inter-war Britain. There is little indication of this in the report, though in fact such reference would have been appropriate. Without her husband's support, both moral and financial, a working-class woman would have little chance of attending classes.

The 1920s: problems in the classroom

The Committee reported that

> *in some Literature classes women are in the majority, in others, chiefly in Economics and allied subjects, there may be none or only one or two. The nature of the subject is therefore an important factor in determining the proportion of women in a University Tutorial Class... in the determination of the subject it sometimes happens that the men of the class express their views more forcibly, and unduly influence the decision, with the result that many potential women members abandon the idea of joining the class, or resign membership long before it has run its course.*

It was not only the choice of subject which might influence women students: in areas where the men students were drawn from a single industry, for example a mining village, there were not so many women students as in areas where the men were drawn from a variety of occupations. The implication would seem to be – unsurprisingly – that the women felt more excluded from a tightly-knit male community. In addition, as the report pointed out, in a mining village the local trade union branch would have been influential in setting up the class and recruiting members, who would choose the broad area which they wished to study – often economics.

> *Women... feel their lack of education more keenly than do men, and are more sensitive about 'exposing their ignorance'. They often feel that classes which are attended by the keen, alert men of the district are not, and are not intended, for such as they believe themselves to be.*

It was claimed that 'the community spirit' was less developed among women than men, although the word competitive might be more appropriate: 'They hesitate to measure themselves against men and against each other.'

The report returned to the argument that women did not appear to take their proper share of the discussion following each lecture. There was apparently some variation, depending again on subject and on the relative number of women. 'In some classes in Literature and Biology, where they form a considerable proportion of the class, women speak freely, but in others they appear shy in the presence of men.' The women 'often feel themselves to be inferior in point of knowledge and experience, and therefore hesitate to engage in discussion'.

The Committee considered the advantages and disadvantages of single-sex classes. Though the members were in favour of classes for women only, in general this was a 'temporary necessity ...we regard mixed classes as an ideal which should be the universal aim.'

This might well have led to the employment of more women tutors but there was no direct reference to the difference – if any – that the sex of the tutor might make to the recruitment of women students. It would be interesting to establish whether the female students experienced less difficulties in classes taught by members of their own sex. It is not possible to deduce now whether women were more likely to attend classes taught by women: the issue is hidden by the fact that, for example, literature classes were more likely to be taught by women. The report did include the observation that one-year classes run by the WEA and other bodies, where the proportion of women tutors was much higher than in three-year tutorial classes, attracted a far higher proportion of women than the three-year classes. The link between the proportion of women students and women tutors, however, is not conclusive; obviously the reasons for women attending one-year classes were more complex.

The 1920s: organisational barriers

The organising bodies, the WEA and joint committees, received a degree of criticism from the Board of Education Committee: in the past the organisers and chief officials had 'almost invariably been men with what may be called the man's point of view', and the Committee believed it was

by no means unlikely that the inadequacy of the representation of women upon the directing staffs had led to the partial neglect of the women's problem. In any case the demands of men, being expressed with greater force and insistence, have proved sufficient to absorb almost all the energies of the controlling bodies.

The Committee recorded the reasons why women were less likely to attend tutorial classes without seeking to tackle the problems. Far from attempting a radical solution, the recommendations in fact perpetuated the status quo: 'the demands of men' would continue to determine the provision of classes.

The Committee closed its report with what it called the 'epitome of the surest of our conclusions':

We believe that the instinct for better things, for beauty, for the 'colour and warmth and light', to which life of every kind is ever striving, is innate in all and can with sympathy be awakened even in darkest England and under the most adverse conditions, and that it is through the fostering of this instinct that our present discontents, of rich and poor alike, can find relief and our national life be rebuilt on a basis of mutual co-operation and goodwill.

This speech appeared to sum up the tone and message of the report: with its missionary zeal and overtones of the dark satanic mills, it considered education to be the universal panacea. There seemed to be a wilful underestimation of the differences between the discontents of the poor and those of the rich. The conclusion is full of a rather naive idealism but there is a hint too of social control, in the 'basis of mutual cooperation and goodwill': this would obviously be regarded as preferable to more militant alternatives.

All the barriers faced by the women students in the inter-war years could in fact be attributed to attitudes; those of men, both at home and in the classroom; of society and the organisations within it; and of the women themselves, who, influenced by the attitudes of others, were bound to doubt their own ability.

These problems were of course not experienced by tutorial class students alone; nor did they apply only to the 1920s. There is a certain familiarity in the Committee's findings; it would seem there has been a depressing lack of progress in the intervening years, as has been graphically illustrated by more recent work on women and education.

Just over seventy years after the Board published its report, Veronica McGivney's research on difficulties for women students in the 1990s was published in *Women Education and Training. Barriers to access, informal stating points and progression routes* (McGivney 1993). The problems she described bear a striking resemblance to those listed in 1922.

The 1990s: Domestic and personal constraints

Domestic constraints can include various problems. The need for childcare arrangements, or care for other family members such as elderly relatives, remains a barrier to participation in education. According to McGivney it is universally accepted - at least by women - that the facility that would most assist women's return to education would be local day care services to support them in their role of carers. This is of course a reflection of much that was reported in 1922.

The timing of the classes can also still be a problem. In the inter-war years the tutorial classes were normally held in an evening when women were often not able to attend; there are still difficulties combining classes with other commitments.

Lack of support from other family members and male partners is obviously discouraging and at worst can be a real obstacle. One important aspect of this is where the husband or partner refuses to make a financial contribution and thus caused real hardship. In addition to course fees, the woman might have to find money for books, exam fees, transport to the class, and of course, payment for childcare.

The relationship with a male partner can be crucial in other ways. McGivney reported that male opposition to a partner's participation is commonplace; some male partners are disparaging, others physically abusive. Resentment about the time taken up by a class may increase as time passes; there may be an element of fear in that the male sees the woman's self development as a threat to the balance of power in their relationship. Some are jealous of any new interest which they feel unable to share. To an extent male partners continue to play a gate-keeping role in facilitating or constraining woman's participation in activities outside the home.

In another echo of the 1922 report, McGivney cited the power structure of society as a factor which militates against women: the lack of women in policy making positions is vitally important. Whereas it can be argued that the situation has changed since 1922, there is clearly still room for improvement. Society is still responsible to a degree for perpetuating the belief that the woman should subjugate her own wishes and needs to those of her family.

The 1990s: dispositional and psychological barriers

Another set of barriers are those which McGivney characterised as dispositional and psychological. These constraints include lack of confidence, fear of not being clever enough and the guilt factor, in relation to domestic and family responsibilities. Stereotyping still encourages the idea that girls should be person-centred, passive, lacking in personal ambition - all of which militate against participation. Poor self-concept means that women still undersell themselves, undervalue their experience and aim lower than they need. Here again there is an echo of the nineteen twenties, when women lacked confidence in themselves and their ability. These attitudes are responsible for many women refusing to contemplate the possibility of participating in education; when combined with other barriers they are insurmountable.

The 1990s: institutional barriers

Institutional barriers to learning for women may take the form of programmes which are not sufficiently flexible to allow for women's domestic commitment: there is an 'assumption that programmes organised for men will also do for women'.

On the question of classes for women only, which were unpopular with the Board of Education Committee except as a temporary measure, McGivney has pointed out the problem that such special provision may address the symptom rather than the cause. Some too would object to what might be regarded as discrimination, even though the reasons may be worthy in themselves.

Recent surveys

Two recent surveys suggest that participation by women in education is still lower than by men. *The Learning Divide* by Naomi Sargant and colleagues published in 1997 by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) reported that twenty-five per cent of men described themselves as 'currently learning' compared to twenty-one per cent of women. (Sargant 1997) When asked about learning undertaken more than three years previously, the figures were the same. Fifty per cent of men questioned stated that they had undertaken some learning within the past three years, while only forty-two per cent of women had done so. Forty-one percent of women had done no learning since completing their full time education, compared to thirty one percent of men. As with any statistical information, of course, there are various factors to be taken into account; in the latter case, for example, the higher proportion of women than men in the older section of the population should be borne in mind, but this would not be sufficient to alter the results significantly.

The following year *The National Adult Learning Survey* published by the DfEE showed a higher rate of participation in adult education in general, which can be attributed to the more extensive form of questioning employed. Nonetheless, the discrepancy between male and female participation remained; seventy per cent of women had undertaken learning during the previous three years, compared to seventy-eight per cent of men. (DfEE1998a)

Some would perceive a glimmer of hope in other statistical information such as that published in the appendix to the government's *The Learning age: a renaissance for a new Britain'* (DfEE 1998b). There has, of course, been a huge increase in participation in higher education; of particular relevance, however, is the fact that over fifty per cent of all higher education students are now female, and almost two thirds of higher education students are described as 'mature'. If the sole reason for women undertaking any kind of education is to gain access to university, the news is good. It must be obvious, though, that the reasons for participation are far more complex than this: to a majority of women in the nineteen twenties the idea of attending university would have been laughable. Motivation has always varied and always will.

Conclusion

It is a truism that statistics can be made to prove any point, but the overwhelming picture of participation by women in education is not an optimistic one. Women's lives have no doubt altered dramatically during the twentieth century, first with the gaining of the vote and more gradually with increased employment opportunities and more enlightened attitudes to family relationships, yet inequality persists.

The fact that the issues which discourage participation by women in adult education classes are well-known does not mean that they are necessarily being addressed. The barriers which faced working class women in the early 1920s were formidable; it is remarkable that many women did attend classes at all. In the seventy years following the publication of the Board of Education Committee's report, the world has witnessed devastating events of all kinds, political, economic and social. The two world wars were responsible for changes in every sphere of life and developments such as those in information technology have further revolutionised society. It is disappointing, then, that there should have been so little change in the provision of classes for women: that the women who braved the classes in the nineteen twenties would have encountered the same barriers if they had attended classes seventy-five years later.

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Peripheral Vision: Staff Development and Part-time Tutors in Adult Education

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This paper is an abbreviated version of a chapter prepared for Morgan, J. and Rogers, A. (eds) *The Changing Adult Curriculum* (forthcoming 2001)
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Introduction

Adult and continuing education has always depended heavily upon part-time tutors. Indeed, the literature (see for example, Jarvis,1995: 164 –5 and Field 1991: 130-133) points to a divide between full-time adult educators who are often to be found in administrative and organisational roles where they oversee educational programmes, and part-timers who are the actual teachers of the programmes. This creates the mildly ironic situation where many full-time professional adult educators spend more time arranging for the education of adults than actually educating adults. This pattern still holds true in both Further and Higher Education. In the Nottingham School of Continuing Education, for instance, academic and academic-related staff of 30+ provide courses taught by over 300 part-time tutors annually. The ratio of part-timers to full-timers may be lower in the Further Education sector, but again part-timers are vital in securing the ability of colleges to staff all their programmes, especially in the evening and at weekends. Meanwhile, in the rest of the Higher Education sector the use of part-time teachers in growing rapidly, though as Husbands (1998) points out, remarkably little is known about the use, treatment or needs of such part-timers.

However, the centrality of part-time tutors to the provision of adult education has not secured a position for them as 'core' workers in the field (Atkinson: 1985). If adult education is marginalised as a relatively low status area (HESA do not consider Open University or continuing education part-timers as worth recording, Husbands, 1998:265) part-time teachers suffer a double discrimination by being at the margin of the margin. In this situation, the interests of part-time staff members are still being consistently relegated beneath those of full-time workers. As Corder (1993: 50) says, that such people "…should be in receipt of staff development appropriate to their needs and conditions of service is all too often not accepted or is simply given lip-service"

A further motif of the marginalisation of part-timers and their staff development is the fact that this area is under-researched. The last major study into the area was over a decade and half ago now (Graham *et al.*: 1982), and such research as exists in the intervening period is of small scale, generally relating to data taken from single institutions in the Further Education sector (e.g. Hopkins, 1989, Corder, 1993, Harvey, 1995). There is an almost complete paucity of contemporary research on the relevant provision in the Higher Education sector. (In the longer companion piece to this paper, the absence of research results is addressed, with the report of a survey administered to part-time tutors employed by the Nottingham department, eliciting their views on staff development).

However, this position is changing – and appropriately so in the opinion of this writer. This paper will examine the causes of an awakening recognition that continuing education institutions have a responsibility to consider the staff development needs of part-time tutors, and look at how a package of staff development measures might be constructed.

Here staff development is held to encompass the development of individuals in their competency in teaching, in their professional behaviour and orientations, and in relation to the needs of the institution for which they work (Main, 1985). Staff development thus covers higher levels of professional practice as well as training for discrete tasks and skills.

The Contemporary Relevance of Staff Development for Part-time tutors to Adult Education Practice

There are several reasons for increasing the profile of interest in part-time tutors and their developmental needs at the present time, and these involve an admixture of the principled and the pragmatic. The 'principled' reasons include the proposition that the marginalisation – even exclusion – of the interests of part-time tutors should be regarded as unprofessional and inappropriate. It might, *de facto*, be recognised that part-time tutors and their development needs have hitherto been neglected, but it is, at the same time seen as unacceptable that continuing education institutions should fail to include workers who are central to the delivery of many educational programmes. In short, any number of wrongs don't make a right.

Relatedly, the failure to provide adequate developmental support for part-time tutors across continuing education amounts to a discrepancy between what is practised and what is preached. In teaching on the theory and practice of adult and continuing education, considerable emphasis is laid on the need for excellence of teaching and support services. Yet, as the previous quote from Corder (1993:50) indicates, part-time tutor support in actual adult education programmes is more often honoured in the breach than the observance. Practice has fallen short of what institutions would advocate as acceptable provision, and the realisation has dawned that something should be done about this. This awakening has happened in pockets across adult and continuing education in the Higher Education sector, in Further Education (Robson *et al.*, 1996) and the LEA sector (Summers, 1991). In all sectors though, there is still much ground to be made up. To give one piece of anecdotal evidence, it is only within the last year that the Staff Development Group of UACE has started to concern itself with the staff development of part-time tutors.

On the other hand, action encouraged by governmental and other public bodies has impelled education providers down the path of extending support for part-time staff. The first of these is the movement towards inspection and Quality Assurance across various educational sectors. Within the multiplicity of criteria that departments or institutions have to reach to satisfy inspectors are those concerned with staff issues, including part-time staff. As returns for these inspections have to account for organisational performance under *all* headings, at least some attention has had to be paid to policies and practice for part-time staff support. This has been one area where the cold wind of inspection has blown some good, by forcing institutions to account for why they have or have not provided support for part-time staff members. The many institutions that applied for the Investors in People standard had to produce similar evidence.

Contemporaneously with the inspection and quality processes there have been developments that have brought the prospect of the credentialising of teaching closer. In many Further Education colleges, employment already depends upon the holding of some teaching qualification (from City and Guilds 730 upwards). In Higher Education, one of the central recommendations of the Dearing Committee (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education: 1997) has led to the establishment of the Institute of Learning and Teaching (ILT) which aims to recruit as broadly as it can within the HE sector. Given the push towards credentialised rather than experiential qualifications across a wide swathe of professional and quasi-professional occupations, the likelihood is that before long membership of the ILT will be a *sine qua non* of employment in Higher Education. It is also likely that part-time teachers will be required to have some sort of registration with the ILT. In circumstances like these, it will not be sufficient for employing institutions to employ part-time tutors, sometimes for years, and not consider their responsibility for the development of those tutors. The institutions will have to provide mechanisms through which part-time tutors can prove, keep current and upgrade their skills and knowledge. In FE the FENTO proposals will provide a similar impetus.

Although conceptually distinct, in practice these two clusters of internal and external motivating factors have been intertwined. The argument here is that they have led to a feeling that staff development for part-time tutors is an idea whose time has come. The irony is that it has taken the adult and continuing education sector so long to get to this position. It has long prided itself in its orientation towards good practice in teaching, and praised the commitment and skill of its part-time teachers. However, as is very well known, it has never managed to provide an occupational qualification or set of standards that practitioners would be expected to reach. Over the years attention has turned regularly to the introduction of a qualification for adult educators (Elsdon, 1975: 12-26, Graham *et al.*, 1982: 11-50), but this attention has never produced a unified and coherent response, so that as Jarvis says, up to the present time

> *"...an adult education qualification is not mandatory for practice and no qualified teacher status actually exists"*. (1995: 174)

This is not to say in the slightest that staff development is only to be equated with the provision of formal qualifications, but the defining of professional competence would certainly be a component, and it is an indication of how far staff development for part-timers has to go that even this core component is not in place.

Important Factors in Planning Inclusive Staff Development for Part-time Tutors

In the absence of nationally agreed standards or principles for staff development in adult and continuing education, progress will have to be made at the levels of the institution and/or the department. However, it is beyond the purview of this piece to outline a detailed programme or programmes of staff development for part-time tutors. Not only is there lack of space to do so, but also such a task is greatly complicated by the issue of differentiation within the adult and continuing sector. Much of the literature (see for example Graham *et al.* (1982), Harvey (1995), Hetherington, (1980), Martin (1981), Summers (1991) simply talks about part-time tutors in adult education as though there were no significant differences between the sub-sectors of adult and continuing education. The case here is that it is misleading to think of part-time tutors as all having a single set of characteristics and needs across the range of adult education milieux. What remains of Local Education Authority adult education has a different set of aims, outcomes, subject matter, levels, expectations and institutional requirements to Further Education colleges or the voluntary sector, and all these have a different combination of characteristics to adult and continuing education in Higher Education, or education within the professions, or trade union education. Naturally there are some universal factors centred on the needs and characteristics of adult students, and there are considerable areas of overlap between various sectors, but each of the different areas will have to look to meet particular requirements.

However, some general comments can be made about principles on which staff development should be based, one of which is that it should, in the words of this Conference, be inclusive, and remedy the arms-length relationship continuing education institutions have had with their part-time colleagues. A second is that institutions need to think of staff development along a series of different dimensions. The first three dimensions are concerned with increasing professional competence in the theory and practice of teaching and learning.

1. The first dimension takes on the issue of qualifications for teaching. It is a piece of received wisdom in adult and continuing education that tutors are much more likely to be qualified in their subject area than they are to have a qualification for teaching. As Benn and Fieldhouse (1994) put it:

"Adult educators are often highly trained and well qualified in another discipline but not in adult education. Indeed they are often appointed as adult educators on the basis of that qualification in another discipline. They may have experience of, and commitment to, adult education but often not a specific training in the field".

The research reported in the companion piece to this paper indicates that this description may not be as universal as many have thought. Nonetheless, different levels and modes of qualification will be necessary to meet the various needs of tutors who differ according to levels of pre-existing qualification and experience. For instance

- Very new tutors without pre-service training will need initial tutor training and support. For some this will mean training events to patch in the most basic orientation to adult teaching and learning almost as a survival kit. For all it will mean tutor visits and support to monitor their progress, indicate their successes and offer suggestions for developing their practice.

- Experienced but non-qualified staff may require – and value – procedures to allow them to gain professional qualifications. This may be done through taught courses, or through accreditation of prior experience and learning, or some combination of the two. The present research has indicated that mechanisms allowing for partial or complete accreditation of experience would have particular resonance for this sample of part-time tutors. It may well have for those in other sub-sectors of adult and continuing education.

- Experienced and qualified staff may be encouraged to improve the levels of their qualifications, utilising the range of options outlined immediately above

2. Staff development does not begin and end with credentialisation. Other elements are required, including programmes of professional updating to inculcate an expectation that keeping skills and knowledge contemporary and aligned with good practice is part of the part-time tutor's job. This type of provision may be in the form of discrete evening, half day or day events. The advantage of such events is that they are very useful for spreading good practice, but their very brevity makes it difficult to accumulate points for credit-based qualification systems. It takes an awful lot of seminars to add up to ten CATS points. It may be better to value professional updating on its own terms. Professional updating may also be the type of staff development most applicable for very busy part-time tutors or already qualified tutors who might not have the time available nor the need to engage in extensive programmes of professional qualification, but who still value maintaining a critical edge.

3. A further criterion is that of the salience that adult education work has in

practitioners' lives. At one end of the spectrum, there is the relatively small proportion of 'full-time part-timers' who may well call on, and have need for, quite extensive amounts of resources. If these tutors commit themselves in the medium term or longer to extensive amounts of teaching for an institution then transfer to the regular staff *should* be considered (although in practice this happens all too rarely, especially in Higher Education); nevertheless development support similar to full-time members of staff should be available. This may be about to become a requirement on institutions as a result of European legislation for the rights of part-time workers.

At the other extreme are those who commit only a limited amount of time to their adult educational work. These tutors *may* take up few resources and not wish to partake deeply of staff development. However, we cannot conclude that the generality of such part-time tutors would take this stance as early results from the research that accompanies this paper indicates; even those whose income was only peripherally derived from adult and continuing education claimed a marked propensity to engage in staff development.

4. Provision will also be needed to help with part-time tutors' subject or disciplinary requirements, particularly in the form of subject updating and help and assistance for new tutors.

5. Training and development packages should also consider Information Technology skills and resources for part-time tutors. It is likely to become increasingly useful if tutors can submit teaching and administrative materials electronically and in forms consistent with the institution's software. There is also the issue of hardware support for specialist purposes, and for those tutors who cannot afford the range of IT resources themselves.

6. Staff development should also consider adequate levels of preparation so that tutors can meet the administrative requirements of the institution(s) they work for.

Finally, and on a slightly different tack:

7. Many part-time tutors teach for more than one educational provider, although very little is known, other than anecdotally, about the patterns of this 'portfolio teaching'. To the extent that it exists, though, one way forward for staff development for part-time tutors is greater co-ordination across the sub-sectors of adult and continuing education. This might mean tutors taking some sort of record of their staff development with them, or that providers could be more aware of what staff development practice and opportunities are in other institutions. Co-ordination between institutions and across different sub-sectors could then be possible, which help reduce duplication of effort and provide greater coherence for the part-time tutor.

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FE and social inclusion: understanding the processes of participation

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Since the mid-1980s, further education colleges have been far the largest providers of adult education in Britain. In particular, as the mass provider of education and training for adults, FE colleges have become a major second chance route for the disadvantaged.

So far, the FE sector has attracted little attention from the adult education research community. As a result, relatively little is known about the impact of FE upon adult learners. The paper arises from the life stories of people interviewed as part of a research project funded by the Department of Enterprise and Lifelong Learning in Scotland, aimed at identifying practices to encourage participation among those who have traditionally been excluded from further education.

Policy context

The study is set in the context of the social inclusion and lifelong learning agendas that underpin many current policy developments in Scotland and the wider UK (DfEE, 1998, Scottish Office, 1998a). As the knowledge 'haves' continue to gain most from participation in education, lifelong learning itself may be unintentionally contributing to social exclusion (Fryer 1997; OECD 1998).

This Scottish Executive has stressed the role of education, particularly FE, in promoting social inclusion. Nevertheless, participation and achievement in any form of post compulsory education are uneven, and certain groups continue to be under-represented. This has led to a rise in FE's profile, and to a lesser extent its status (Gallacher and Thompson, 1999; Kennedy 1997).

Thinking about participation and non-participation

Evidence of a 'learning divide' is remarkably persistent. Largely on the basis of quantitative survey data certain groups have been identified as non-participants, including lower socio-economic groups, women with dependent children, unemployed, minority ethnic groups and those in rural areas (McGivney, 1990). We wanted to develop a more subjective understanding of the complex processes by engaging with the voices of the actors themselves.

As such the processes and complexities which underpin the transition from non-participation to participation have to be understood in terms of structural barriers and human agency within the context of people's lives. For some participating in education was not a priority when they were struggling to hold their lives together because of homelessness or poverty.

Researching social inclusion through biographies

The study focused on three groups: new learners, early entrants (people who completed a course of study in 1997), and non-participants. While this paper focuses on adults, 16-19 year olds were also included. As researchers we found it refreshing that the funders stressed the use of qualitative methodology, enabling us to use biographical interviews and focus groups. Biographies of the participants were used in order to connect past and present lives towards attitudes and involvement, or not, in FE. Statistical data was gathered from existing sources as background information. Four case study institutions were identified. Senior management and tutors were also interviewed to obtain a broader picture.

Participants were recruited through the four case study colleges.

Non-participants were recruited using two main strategies:

- 'Snowballing' - contacting non-participant friends and family members of the new entrants;
- Contacting non-participants through places where people at risk of social exclusion may go, including youth projects, family centres, and job centres.

We value life histories as a research tool as 'interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher' (Reinharz, 1992:19). Biographies are becoming an increasingly popular method in UK adult education research (Edwards, 1993, West, 1996; Merrill, 1999) as a framework for revealing the subjectivity, complexity and context of human behaviour. Biographies enable participants to reflect upon, interpret, give meaning to and construct past events and experiences within a social context (Denzin, 1989, Rosenthal, 1993).

Although biographies are individual, shared experiences of gender and class are evident when comparing the stories. Participants were keen that their voices were heard by policy makers so that the barriers to participation for people in similar socio-economic situations can be broken down.

Impact of earlier life experiences

Many participants lived in working class city areas of West and East Coast Scotland, and one rural area was also included. Working class culture, roles and attitudes are prevalent despite the decline in traditional manual jobs. Many of the men in their 30s and 40s were unemployed without skills and qualifications. For some this had led to personal difficulties; divorce, alcoholism, imprisonment. Participants and non-participants both identified a range of negative issues, structural, personal and institutional, which either made learning a struggle or prevented them from learning. Initial experiences of schooling were shaped by class and gender. Most left at the earliest possible age with few or no qualifications for the attraction of a wage. This was associated with the traditional working class culture which in many cases led to antithetical attitudes to education (Willis, 1977). One man said that anyone who went to college in his area was considered a 'cissy'. Many also had negative experiences of school which as an adult undermined their confidence of returning to learn:

Well if I think back on it the reasons I am apprehensive to go to college or a classroom situation must be based on past fears or experiences. I don't seem to do too well in the classroom situation. (non-participant, male)

Several women became pregnant in their teens preventing further participation:

I was 17 and I was pregnant with my first wee boy, so that was me, and after that it's just been kids constant. I wish I had never had any weans (children). I wish I could have been a hairdresser or a dancer and stayed on at one of these things that I liked...That I had my own place and had my own life, because it is hard. That's how my 2 boys don't stay with me because I wasn't able to cope. I couldn't cope with my own life. I was pregnant when I was 17, so I had one when I was 18 and then one when I was 19.

Exclusionary issues

Colleges have changed faster than people's perceptions of them (Merrill, 2000). School experiences may be carried with people through their life, and many rejected FE as resembling school, as a place where either 'different' people go or as full of teenagers. While many felt comfortable about learning at a community or outreach centre, they lacked the confidence to attend classes at the main FE campus:

I think it would be off-putting to be honest. I don't think I would have gone to a college. The fact that this was where it was ...and I knew there were going to be people like myself

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– what I'm trying to say is I wouldn't go into a student class, people in their 20s, because I would feel out of place and to my mind people in their twenties will pick up things quicker. I wouldn't be happy at any college... I would never have entered a beginners course in a college because I would feel stupid (new,entrant, male).

Several said they would not have the confidence to walk into a college and ask for information about courses.

For women, lack of childcare facilities or their poor quality was among the highest barriers. This related to working class women's attitudes, where financial resources are limited and there was a feeling of guilt about leaving a young child. In this situation, many experience mixed, and in some ways conflicting emotions about their role:

I would like to go to college but that's not possible. I think I would feel guilty about leaving (son) with a childminder or crèche ...I can't really do it.

On some FE programmes childcare is provided free but sometimes this is not enough:

I had a nursery place... You got your expenses as in your bus fares every month but even with that it was too much...I couldn't afford that off my benefit and try to buy clothes and run the house as well. I just felt that it was too much (non-participant).

Financial problems were a common issue. This reflects a number of inter-related issues such as low income due to insecure employment or unemployment and structure of the benefits system.

I went the first day...I thoroughly enjoyed it (college) and I came home and my fiancé wasn't working at the time and he said 'there's absolutely no way we can afford this'. I've been to the welfare rights officer and I've been down to the Social Security and there's no way. Because we are two single people living together we basically have to pay full rent...It was just a nightmare. We were going to end up worse off than we were and I spent the whole night crying my eyes out.... I was very, very disappointed (new entrant, female).

Often structural and personal factors interacted and interrelated, making the search for a single or primary exclusionary factor an illusory one. Some non-participants actively chose not to return to learn. Some had other life priorities as one young man explained 'if you are living on the streets you can't think about education'. Some questioned the value of education. One unemployed man whose friend went to college but still did not get a job asked 'so what's the point?'

From exclusion to inclusion

Similarly, the processes through which adults become engaged in learning often involve the complex interaction of a number of factors, rather than any single factor or planned decision-making process. Nevertheless, participants identified a number of key motivating factors, some marked by gender differences.

An important motive which emerged was that of self-development, particularly with respect to women. Most of the women are working-class so class factors intersected with those of gender. Time spent in the home looking after children, which none of them regretted, allowed the women to reflect upon their lives and their identity. Wanting to learn for self-development and hence change their identity to become a person rather than somebody's wife or mother were critical factors in starting courses at a college:

Well you feel that when you come here [community learning centre] you are starting to find yourself. That might sound a bit stupid. You are not a clone or somebody else – you are starting to find your own identity although it has taken me – I won't say how many years. (early entrant, female)

Improving employment prospects was important for many adult students, particularly men. Several unemployed men in their 40s and 50s realised that the labour market had changed and that they needed new skills and qualifications to get a job. In particular computing skills were viewed as essential:

> *I wanted to learn this (computing) so as I could get it on my CV. A lot of the jobs I went for – the application forms for Sainsbury's and B & Q when I've applied for jobs - they all have a wee bit on them 'do you have any computer skills or keyboarding skills?'...So that's why I've done this course* ... (new entrant, male).

However, many knew that their courses were low level. They were largely resigned to the fact that they might never work again. Men were pessimistic (or realistic?) about regaining employment. Women became more optimistic about using learning to get employment as years at home childrearing, rather than unemployment, made them determined to enhance their career and find a space for themselves.

Learning pathways, learning careers and 'drift'

The research revealed a wide range of interlocking social processes which facilitate, or do not, re-engagement in learning. We have referred to the processes through which people engage in education as the learning pathways which they follow. In understanding these processes we are looking at relations between the individual and society, particularly the ways in which social structures (including poverty and inequalities) constrain human agency. Some people may be able to overcome these constraints, and we are investigating the processes through which this takes place, but for others the constraints may be too strong or numerous for them to 'break free'. In addition some non-participants actively choose not to participate in FE or any other form of formal education (particularly among excluded groups, learning is not always a positive opportunity, but rather an exercise in compulsion).

Initial participation may not result from agonised decisions. Matza's (1963) concept of 'drift' may be useful in understanding the processes that lead non-participants into education:

> *Drift is a gradual process of movement, unperceived by the actor, in which the first stage may be accidental or unpredictable from the point of view of any theoretic frame of reference...* (Matza, 1963: 29).

This is not to say that all people on the margins of education and society who become participants 'drift' into education. For some it is a positive, conscious and planned decision. However, the stories that some respondents told indicated notions of drift. It must also be noted that the process of drift takes place within a framework of structural constraints which may impose significant barriers to learning, and opportunities which facilitate participation. In understanding the pathways through which people come to participate in education a number of factors emerge as being of importance.

Firstly, biographies revealed the importance of critical incidents, such as divorce, bereavement or redundancy, which act as a turning point (Edwards, 1993, West, 1996, Merrill, 1999). It is the combination of changes in both barriers and motivations (or agency and structure) that may provide what Strauss describes as 'turning points' which force a person to 'take stock, to re-evaluate, revise, re-see and re-judge' (see Bloomer, 1999).For example, divorce encouraged one woman: 'I really didn't go out much when I was married so then I kind of had to force myself to start to go out'. Initially, she took her granddaughter to a mothers and toddlers group, leading to contact with an adult education tutor, then one course led to another at a FE outreach centre.

Involvement in other projects such as local family centres, tenants' groups, women's groups, community resource centres, youth projects, which often involves a considerable amount of informal contact and learning, is also important in facilitating the return to more formal learning for many adults. Such involvement may increase self-confidence, extend social networks and increase knowledge about provision with regard to FE education in a local area. One new entrant, for example, through attending courses at her local family learning centre had found out about FE courses. In addition, the staff at the Centre had given her encouragement about her abilities:

It gave me a boost because somebody with a bit of intelligence had the confidence in me to go and do it [apply for college] (new entrant, female)

The availability of community-based FE provision enabled many respondents to make the transition into learning in a more welcoming environment. Respondents were clear that without this provision they would not have taken the first step back into learning. A small number had tried courses at a college campus but did not like the atmosphere.

I like the way it's informal, not like X [main campus]...When I first went I would go to the wrong place and they would say 'you can't come here and you can't go over there'...Because you get a wee plastic card and I do two or three hours a month and they tick it, copy it and sometimes I forget to take my card in and they come after you, hounding you (new entrant, male).

Outreach centres were perceived as being more flexible, local, and 'full of people like themselves'. Tutors were viewed as friendly; 'you can talk to them'. However, there is evidence from this study that such centres can become too cosy and overprotective, so that learners avoid progression elsewhere.

The availability of crèche and childcare facilities was another key factor which facilitated the participation of many women in FE. Free childcare, or classes which were arranged around school hours, enabled some women to attend courses but not all colleges or programmes offered this. Many female participants described having these as 'essential' for participation.

Once involved in learning some participants showed evidence of developing a 'learning career'. Learning became an important part of their identity, choosing to progress to other courses, although this may not have been their original intention upon entry. Their learner identity and learning career became strengthened through 'significant learning experiences' (Antikainen et al. 1996). Again a number of factors can be identified as being of importance.

A number of our respondents indicated that the atmosphere of the college and the relationships which they established with their tutors were important in enabling them to become more committed to their role as learners. The teaching approaches favoured by adult returners include being able to work at their own pace, small and informal classroom settings, tutors who can talk to them on their level and who make learning enjoyable in a relaxed atmosphere.

The support which students receive from their fellow students is also of considerable importance in the development of their learning careers. The strong structure of peer support is important in enabling many students to make the transition from 'uncertain learners', with an ambivalent attitude towards their role as a student, to people who are fully engaged with the learning process, and see this as a key aspect of their lives and social identity.

Well I think there is more than one reason. It was definitely to keep me up to date in computing with an eye on getting a job when my son is older. But as I came there were other things. Like B and I are great pals and we come together. I have made a lot of friends and we socialise together. Like a few of us started running and that to keep fit. (early entrant, female)

Associated with the development of learning careers, the goals which learners wish to pursue may change over time. This can be seen in the development of learning careers among a number of the women in this study. Many of them initially returned to learn for self-development and issues relating to their gender status, but tied up with this is a desire to re-enter the job market with better qualifications so that they do not return to what they perceive as dead-end jobs such as shop work. As their confidence in learning increases adult learners feel that this is possible:

It's like once you start and you get some modules, and you know you can do the HNC, and you think well I'll keep going because if I don't I will be back to where I was before. And I don't want that. I suppose I want better – I don't mean that in a bad way – but I want different things now. Different jobs anyway. (early entrant, female)

The voices of the participants and non-participants reveal often fragmented lives. The complex processes of structure and human agency which may enable a person to cross into learning are themselves fragile. Although the emphasis of the research was on social inclusion and lifelong learning we must also accept that some adults do not want to play this game, while some may return at a later stage when other priorities have been sorted out. The ways in which FE institutions respond to the social inclusion agenda is critical to bringing in marginal learners. Taking into account the context of the lives of people in their local communities and their position in the socio-economic structure is important if FE colleges are to be successful in attracting and addressing the needs of such learners.

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Participation and inclusion: opening up a discourse of diminishing returns

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Despite years of research, policy development and some innovative work, the literature is strikingly consistent in constructing a pattern of participation in adult education of a 'learning divide' between the usual suspects who benefit and those who do not. Whilst the dominant discourse has produced some knowledge and understanding about 'participation', there is a sense of diminishing returns setting in. We know a good deal about who are 'included' and who are 'excluded' and why this may occur. Nevertheless, the discourse limits our ways of thinking about 'the problem of participation' and the possibilities of developing more 'inclusive' practice. The terms of the dominant discourse have systematically reinforced one particular view in which participation is professionally and institutionally controlled and, consequently, defined largely in vocational, instrumental and individual terms.

The purpose of this paper is to argue the case for thinking about participation in adult learning that draws on insights from the radical tradition in education. Fundamental to this tradition has been recognition of the importance of connecting learning and struggle.

Another way of thinking about 'participation' is to see where learning and living come together in people's lives and then follow through its implications. There is a growing recognition of the importance of informal and often 'invisible' adult learning (see Tough, 1983; Beinart and Smith, 1997; Tight, 1998). Despite that, there has been little work drawing attention to *the collective learning iceberg* that goes on in social movements and communities in struggle. The connection between learning and politics links back to a long tradition of adult learning. In a context where there is potential for greater participation in social and civic politics, as evidenced by the growth of social movements, reconnecting with this excluded discourse can help to redefine the 'problem of participation' and its implications for our role as adult educators.

Rule one: participation is a 'good thing'

Adult education has often reflected a *social conscience* approach (see Williams in McIlroy and Westwood, 1993) in which the adult educator has a missionary purpose to enlighten. This motive unquestioningly assumes education to be a good thing. Not surprisingly, studies of participation also start from the view that education is a good thing which research and policy can further. But if participation is so beneficial, why do so few people recognise it as such? Bown (1989), addressing the issue of motivating adult learners, noted that involving more adults would require transforming the unwilling into the willing, adding the important caveat:

> *That of course requires us to be convinced that what we have to offer is really of some value to the currently unwilling.*

This is an insightful and telling point. The boundaries of the dominant discourse are recognised but the rubicon is not crossed. Instead of questioning the professional wisdom about what we offer as educators, attention is directed towards how we can motivate more learners to participate in what is currently available. What has to be changed is the motivation of learners rather than professional wisdom. Similarly, recent policy initiatives aimed at widening participation and creating a learning society (see Kennedy, 1997) start from the assumption that participation is a good thing. The argument of this paper, however, is that we have to situate this claim in relation to educational and political purposes.

As Williams (McIlroy and Westwood, 1993) points out, adult educators have also been concerned with *social consciousness* and action, rather than simply being motivated by a social conscience. In the former, adult education aims to help people to analyse the society they live in and how to change it. From this perspective, adult education's main role is to contribute to the process of social change. The purpose adult education serves, and who benefits from it, are key questions to ask before a 'premature ultimate' commitment to education as a universal good is made. The distinction between *education for social consciousness* and *education as social conscience* helps to clarify the underlying purposes and values of the two positions and the ways in which they construct 'participation'. In the former, it is linked with the wider activities of collectivities, of movements in society, in the latter, largely with individual recruitment into the education provided by institutions.

The ubiquity of the assumption that education is a 'good thing' may simply reflect the hegemony of a particular type of education and closure of debate about its purpose. We need to remind ourselves that education is an 'essentially contested concept' with legitimate alternative points of view. In other words, there are competing and conflicting ideologies about the purposes of adult education; to put it another way, both social conscience and social consciousness traditions in adult education may have claimed education to be a good thing whilst disagreeing about what it meant.

Rule two: institutionalised monopoly - participation equals formal learning

In many studies the meaning of participation is framed in terms of taking part in a course of study or a specific organised learning activity. More often than not, these are accredited, certificated, endorsed and provided according to market determined criteria. The 'problem of participation' is then posed in terms of 'solutions' that facilitate greater access to the learning opportunities available. However, there is more going on here than simply enhancing access. The way the problem and solution are defined reinforces a particular perspective on what learning is, how it occurs and what purposes it serves. The overall emphasis of the dominant discourse is on participation in institutionalised provision.

In the institutionalised vision of learning and life it is quite easy to assume that low levels of participation reflect low levels of learning or low levels of motivation for learning. It is participation in the courses of study, subjects and forms of knowledge deemed legitimate by these institutions which are, after all, regarded as significant education. Yet, as Tight (1998) remarks, in his study it became very difficult to find someone who had not been actively learning! Not only does the dominant discourse construct participation, but does so whilst reinforcing an institutional politics of learning in terms of controlled space, time and opportunities that are policed by educational institutions. What people return to is a particular form of institutionalised education and the role of a professional class of educators who service it. As Foley (1999) comments, so intent have we been on constructing education that we often fail to see learning.

Rule three: learners are 'abstract' not 'social' individuals

By focussing on adults returning to learning situations, studies of participation reproduce and reinforce particular assumptions and understandings about learners. They are seen as individuals abstracted from their membership of different groups rather than located as part of a wider body. Moreover, this individualising of the learner is reflected in, and reinforced by, a process of education that is largely about selecting, categorising and differentiating people according to their alleged merits. What this excludes from view is the learner as a 'social individual' (Miliband, 1994) in which expressions of individuality are tempered by concerns for the common good or, indeed, where individuality is both a function and outcome of social interaction.

The taken for granted view that adult education is about the individual ignores the contested nature of what this means. Miliband's depiction of the 'social individual', a person with a wider conscience prepared to act to achieve common goals beyond his or her own immediate interests, points towards a view of the individual actively involved in the sphere of civil society, practising obligations and asserting rights along with others. In this view, individual fulfilment is combined with the larger demands of solidarity and concern for the public good. What Miliband terms 'socialised individualism', therefore, involves engagement in forms of learning and action through participation in civic associations and organisations and the role of education would be to foster this.

Furthermore, it has been argued that this process of constructing the individual in cultural and ideological ways is part of a political project of fragmenting potential sites of collective opposition to structural inequalities. Edwards (1991) suggests that 'autonomy within inequality' is reproduced through an emphasis on the individual provided with a quasi-market of choice and flexibility of provision. The apotheosis of this system is the 'bespoke' learning programme and the educational supermarket. But markets are never neutral. The ideological power of this construction is furthered by the particular identity which the learner is assumed to possess - white, middle class identities which reinforce and draw from a wider cultural stock of meanings.

The dominant way of framing the learner cuts them off from the wider context of societal participation - who participates (and who is excluded), in what and to what effect? In this process adult education is divorced from the everyday life of people, ignoring how power shapes their experiences and their concerns. Is it any wonder that for many powerless groups, adult education seems irrelevant?___ Participation in adult education reaffirms learning as a form of 'abstract individualism' rather than a collective project in which 'social individuals' learn and act together. It focuses on individual motives, concerns and needs in terms that are institutionally recognised as educationally valid. The possibility that adults as (potential) learners may have collective interests is not part of the dominant discourse.

Rule four: there are barriers to participation, not resistance

The dominant discourse has difficulty in conceptualising non-participation as a form of resistance. If education is a good thing, why should it be resisted? What does it imply about the non-participant? Are they mad, bad or both? What is ruled out is the idea of non-participation as an active, informed process. If non-participants' experiences of education have not been particularly good - which is what the evidence would imply - then why should they think it will be different second time round? Might not their refusal to participate be an active choice, informed by their previous experience? As Giroux points out:

> *Resistance...redefines the causes and meanings of oppositional behaviour by arguing that it has little to do with deviance and learned helplessness, but a great deal to do with moral and political indignation.* (cited in Quigley, 1992)

People may resist for good reasons. We can distinguish two forms of resistance, one that attempts to create a new base of power and, two, resistance which involves a struggle to escape from power. This latter form of resistance is 'frictional' and may not necessarily involve overt, intended or direct conflict. It may be in these terms that we locate non-participation in adult education. If so, what is potentially illuminating is the ethnographic work done in secondary education on 'cultures of resistance'. Willis (1977), for example, argues that the oppositional behaviour of certain groups of school pupils can be understood as a very rational, even if unsuccessful, response to the 'hidden curriculum' and their experiences of the boredom and indignities of schooling. If this applies to school, why not to adult education ?

There is a strong case for arguing that in its essential characteristics adult education is similar to other aspects of the educational system. Typically for working class students the system constructs a sense of their inadequacy and failure and reinforces the hegemony of the current order. This line of argument is developed in Quigley's (1992) account of non-participation as a form of resistance to the practice of adult literacy. He draws the distinction between the 'habitat of objectified lessons' and the 'habitus of values and culture' in which education is provided. Whereas the 'habitat' may be acceptable to the resister if perceived as relevant, the 'habitus' of education are often rejected. In other words, resistance is a choice made by the learner. What this points towards is the importance of an approach that builds its curriculum from the lived experience of the learners.

The 'collective learning iceberg'

It seems reasonable to surmise that many people find, and will continue to find, adult education unattractive and irrelevant to their daily lives. Despite many well intentioned efforts to attract people, the sense of frustration felt by their failure to respond to what is offered is often evident. It is easy to assume people are 'apathetic' and have limited horizons. Redefining participation, however, points to the possibility that we are or may be part of the problem in terms of how we construct - in limited and limiting ways - our understanding of adult learning and what participation means. A more 'inclusive' approach would begin from where people live and learn, working back from this to what it means for their role in encouraging and supporting learning.

If we begin to think more 'inclusively' about learning, we can begin to recognise the potential of social movements as *collective learning icebergs*. This means we need to think differently about how and why people learn and what we do. If we begin with movements as the context for learning, we need to include what is distinctive about them in our understanding of the learning process. The table below presents some of the obvious differences between what it offers compared to learning in institutional settings.

Social movement learning	Institutional learning
deals with issues and problems important to people	focus on subject areas / learning for earning/individual need
voluntary membership	'voluntary' but not always
involves discussion and debate in democratic ways	more formal pedagogical relationships
involves adults as citizens and social agents	adults have no overt political agency
it is flexible and immersed in daily life	formal, timetabled and of fixed duration

involves collective learning shaped by common goals	individual learning, often of a competitive type
learning shaped by the interests/needs of movement	learning shaped by curricular objectives
involves learning linked to social action	learning linked to individual development
learning in opposition to established power	does not involve challenging power
'students' are activists / general public	students are those who enrol on courses
adult learning is contested	learning is unproblematic

The sharp contrast raises the first point that adult and community educators have choices to make about who they work with, why, and where it occurs. These choices cannot be settled by technical answers or methodological proposals but only through intellectual, political and ethical considerations about what it is important to do and why. We have our own choices to make within circumstances that we are never fully in control of. But denying that choice exists is, in existentialist terms, an act of 'bad faith'.

Learning in social movements has to be understood as a contradictory process full of ambiguities and ambivalence (Foley, 1999). It is not pristine pure or self-evidently better than other ways of learning. It is simply different and opens up fresh opportunities for learning that lie outside the field of more formal educational institutions and discourses of participation. Its embeddedness in social action, its unsystematic nature, the possibility of it resulting in learning the 'wrong things' means there are ample problems as well as possibilities. Having said that, it does provide us with another way of thinking about adult learning and what we do in relation to it.

In order to maximise the positive potential of social movement learning adult and community educators have to work out an appropriate role if they want to align themselves with education for social change. The strength of much learning that goes on in communities in struggle is that learning is embedded in social and community action. Because of this it often goes unacknowledged and escapes the attention of those involved as well as outsiders like adult educators. In some respects, if the learning is not made explicit it is not learnt and, if learning is not adequately recognised and preserved, it easily gets lost. 'The wheel', as it were, has to be continually reinvented. Making the learning explicit and systematising the learning process is an important task and one that adult and community educators have some expertise in.

A fundamental insight is that if adult and community educators are to connect with movements they need to begin with an understanding of the learner as a collective agent and not simply as an individual. If they are to be useful to movements, and individuals participating in them, they have to be able to devise a curriculum that relates to their collective interests. To start this, adult and community educators have to be *out* of institutions and buildings and *into* the networks which link them with people in communities. Movements may enlist the skills of adult educators, but let's not wait for this to happen. If we are committed to education for change we need to make alliances and explore how we can support the initiatives of collectivities in struggle. We also need, where possible, to turn the resources and policies of the state to the benefit of movements. However, simply building networks of relationships, despite its importance, is only the first step.

Adult educators and community workers have to accept the political nature of their role. Neutrality is not an option. The problem, in part at least, is that the claim to neutrality is deeply entrenched. If we are to contribute to the educational work of movements, we need to participate, in some way, with their aims and aspirations. Leaving the status quo unchallenged by refusing to act is, of course, highly political too. However, it is less visible and those who profess neutrality are less likely to be conspicuous. The guise of neutrality is aided by the fact that it is difficult to attribute active and political intentions to seemingly 'passive' behaviour.

The liberal rejection of committed education is, of course, to equate the alternative with propaganda. However, what this evades is the extent to which power is always implicated in the construction of knowledge and is never detached, 'free-floating' as it were, outwith relations of power. Moreover, being committed does not preclude one from active deliberation, sifting of evidence and arguments, being open-minded and so forth and engaging in collective action. The former are not the preserve of liberal educators (see Taylor, Rockhill and Fieldhouse, 1985). In order to make the most of the relationship between social movements and education, the educational has to become more political and the political more educational.

Conclusion

The dominant discourse positions adults as non-participants in education which is then constituted as the 'problem' to overcome. If we locate adult learning in the context of collectivities in struggle both the 'learner' and the 'educator' are repositioned with the latter outside of the contexts where people learn and act in daily ways. Supporting the autonomy of groups to define their own problems and develop their own organisational structures must be a key feature of a more genuinely democratic and egalitarian culture and the educational opportunities this represents should not be neglected. A more 'inclusive' way of thinking about participation in adult learning would seek to develop a curriculum from the social context of experience. This demands an engagement with the contradictions people experience in their lives. The idea of activists as learners connects us with a tradition of radical social action concerned with equality, democracy and social justice. If we make the connections between these concerns and adult learning in movements, we can seek to enrich both.

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Valuing exclusive educational provision for disabled adults

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Introduction

The year 2000 will soon be widely recognised as a watershed in the history of educational provision for disabled people in the UK. The Government will introduce legislation this session which will make it illegal, except in certain defined circumstances, to discriminate against people on grounds of disability in all forms of educational provision. A brief consideration of data on participation in further and higher education over the last 10 years shows that already more disabled people than ever are included in mainstream provision (e.g. rising from 2.6% of first year undergraduate entrants in 1994-5, to 3.8% in 1997-98; source Higher Education Statistics Agency). The inclusion of disabled people – rather than segregated provision or no provision – is thus rapidly becoming the accepted norm, but is it a routine matter to make inclusion work to their advantage? I want to argue that there are some circumstances where unproblematic inclusion acts to the disadvantage of the learner, suggesting the alternative paradigm of exclusive education.

4½ paradigms of education

During the 20th Century it is possible to trace a number of distinct paradigms that have been applied to educational provision for disabled people; these are in chronological order: *rehabilitation, handicap, special educational needs* and *inclusive learning.* Rehabilitation was the model that dominated virtually all attempts to provide education for disabled people in the first half of the 20th century and remains pervasive to this day. The aim of rehabilitation is to cure the individual (of their disability) or enable them to function as if they were "normal". The following quotation illustrates very precisely the underlying ideology:

> *If, as happened to me following my spinal injury, the disability cannot be cured, normative assumptions are not abandoned... The result, for me, was endless soul-destroying hours at Stoke Mandeville Hospital trying to approximate able-bodied standards by 'walking' with callipers and crutches.* (Finkelstein, quoted in Oliver, 1996: 105)

A contemporary example from the education sector is the practice of conductive education, imported from Hungary.

The "half paradigm" centres around the issue of integration/segregation. Early attempts to create special provision were nearly always segregated from other educational institutions. The legislators of the potent 1944 Education Act recognised this and planned that disabled children should be educated in mainstream schools where ever it was practicable. The Act also introduced a complex definition of handicap using 11 categories. In practice handicapped children were nearly always educated away from their non-disabled peers in special schools, which often provided a second-rate education, with a desperately limited curriculum. The landmark Warnock report (1978) comprehensively challenged these practices and came down decisively in favour of integration (in the sense of where provision was located), supplanting the definition of handicap with a new paradigm of special educational needs (SEN). In practice the proportion of children educated in special schools did not decline, though provision of specialist teaching and SEN resources in mainstream schools did increase (Barnes, Mercer & Shakespeare, 1999: 105). During the 1990s integration became the new orthodoxy and several influential critics have pointed out the danger in a policy where integration becomes a goal in itself, rather than a means to an end (Oliver 1996: ch.6).

SEN has clearly become something of a growth industry – 20% of all children are said to have them, but only 3% have an official statement that entitles them to special resources or additional tuition. Meeting the needs of such a large number of children and a continual stream of evidence of the inadequacy of special provision has ensured that the segregation/integration debate remains high on the agenda. The new clarion call of *inclusion* (Disability Rights Task Force, 1999; Armstrong, Armstrong and Barton, 1999) meshes well with the wider concerns in the UK and Europe over social exclusion (i.e. what used to be called poverty). In post-16 education the most influential formulation of inclusion was proposed in Tomlinson's *Inclusive Learning Report* (1996) which emphasised the similarities between the needs of different learners, irrespective of any impairment. Tomlinson writes, "By 'inclusive learning' therefore, we mean the greatest degree of match or fit between the individual learner's requirements and the provision that is made for them." (1996: 26). Good matches are illustrated with some case studies which side step the segregation/integration issue by choosing examples from both types of provision. The name of Tomlinson's committee is also significant since it supplies the new orthodox label – *learning difficulties and/or disabilities [LDD]* – to supplant SEN.

Problems, problems

In focusing on the concept of an individual match Tomlinson avoids the trap of elaborate categorisation necessary to make a concept like SEN or handicap operational. Every learner's needs should be individually met, but is this a realistic goal in the increasingly pressurised world of post-16 education? There are several sources of evidence to suggest that goal remains elusive, though force of the new anti-discrimination law may change that. There is abundant evidence that a large number of people (one fifth of the total) leave school without attaining what is officially regarded as the standard of functional literacy, let alone the full complement of level 3 qualifications suggested by National Training Targets (Moser, 1999). What I find truly shocking about Moser's deeply flawed report is that we keep finding the same thing out – the level of so-called functional illiteracy hasn't really changed in 20 years – and Moser does not take us any nearer to an explanation. Years of provision and curriculum change under the aegis of the Basic Skills Agency and its predecessors has apparently made no impact on this dire situation.

The Further Education Funding Council [FEFC], charged with the legal obligation to consider the needs of all post-16 students, has invested heavily in the LDD area. It provides additional funding units to support around 130,000 students annually costing £180 million and it pays fees for 2,000 students in specialist colleges at an annual cost of £43 million. These figures represent a growth of 80% over the last five years. The Council, however, is unsure of what it is getting for its money: the quality of LDD and basic education provision (curriculum area 10 as defined by the FEFC) has attracted a disproportionate amount of attention from the FEFC Inspectorate when compared with other curriculum areas. Very few FE colleges get the top grade 1 mark for their provision in this area and several general reports have grappled with the perceived problems (FEFC, 1996, 1998, 1999a and 1999b). Reports criticise unimaginative lessons, poor resources (the Portakabins at the back of the car park!) and the over emphasis on accreditation. There are also contradictory criticisms of the lack of emphasis on individual attainment and qualifications.

In the FEFC's national survey of LDD students (1997) just under one half were following discrete programmes (i.e. programmes of basic and/or special education). This figure coincides with the proportion following programmes at pre-foundation level (i.e. lower than NVQ level 1). Around 40% of the students in that survey were classified as having moderate to severe learning difficulties or mental ill health. In short, post-16 institutions are being asked to provide a pre-secondary school curriculum. Independent research (Ash and colleagues, 1997; Skill, 1996; Sutcliffe & Macadam, 1996) suggests that where students with LDD were following mainstream programmes, they often felt very isolated from their non-disabled peers and both groups shared the same perception that LDD students were slower, less capable learners.

Fitting in

The problems discussed so far can be related to Tomlinson's concept of fit. Disabled students do not necessarily fit in well to existing provision – the issue of fit can be manifest in a number of ways including prior experience of education, curriculum (content, delivery and/or assessment) and social mix. All these factors are evident in the evaluation research we carried out on Nottingham's Widening Provision project which was part of the Higher Education Funding Council Non-Award Bearing Continuing Education programme (*Circular 4/95*). Under Widening Provision two types of course emerged: courses in day centres and other community settings where mainstream further and higher education provision no longer reached (if it ever had) and courses for groups of people who identified themselves, at least in part, by sharing a disability (e.g. dyslexia or blindness) with other students. The research included a mix of focus group work, questionnaire surveys, individual interviews with students, their families and carers. The findings from this work are the subject of an on-going programme of publication, which all share a commitment to make student voices heard directly (Dale & Green, 1998a and 1998b; Dale & Taylor, 2000 and unpublished; Taylor, 2000) and provide further details of the project.

Prior experience of education

In Widening Provision we worked with several groups of adults who knew they were or thought they might be dyslexic. Their descriptions of school experiences are striking and moving as Karen and Elaine's testimony shows.

Yeah, I got caned you know [for failing spelling tests]. In front of the class regularly, at least twice a day, perhaps from the time when I was three upwards towards nine.

My past experience, I mean being at school when I was a child, I was put into this block called the remedial block ... I don't think dyslexic was ever heard of ... it was only in the last five years I've learned to cope with it and knew it existed and know I'm not stupid. I've lost loads of education which I wish I could have back. It is very hard to come out from doing a whole childhood of being told at school that you're stupid ... to become an adult and not think you're stupid.

Several respondents spoke of their frustration at the remedial (special needs) tuition they received. These graphic accounts also show why assessment can be a major psychological hurdle in post-school education. Suzanne told the focus group how assessed work was returned to her at junior school when the work with the lowest mark in the class was given out last and the rest of the class turned round, scraping their chairs on the floor as they positioned themselves to watch the spectacle.

So after a couple of weeks with the ritual of chair scraping, the kids turning round coz they knew we were going get it in a minute; even now if someone scrapes the chair, I'm

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on the floor, that does it and I got that week in, week out, for all those years.

Curriculum

Unsatisfactory experiences of early schooling were not repeated in the same way into adulthood, but humiliation and frustration can still be deeply felt when the curriculum on offer is not stimulating. Here Suzanne and John describe their experiences of adult basic education.

Before all I've ever been offered is a one-to-one, or one with a couple of children and I've sat in lessons and, can I say it again, wooden letters that they hand round and I've sat there and made words out of wooden letters.

I have been on courses several times and really got myself geared up and motivated to go on these courses, got myself there, stuck for a couple of weeks and then after a couple weeks I thought, "well, you know I don't seem to be getting on any better because the tests have been tailored, i.e. this course it hasn't been tailored for something suitable for myself with what problem I've got."

In a computer course we ran for 16 blind students, 13 made comments on the importance of having a tutor who understood their particular learning needs. This also featured strongly in other programmes such as the dyslexia courses and three different disability rights courses, where all the tutors employed over three years were disabled rights activists. There is a danger in assuming that disabled people who also happen to be educators, will be advocates for disabled students. However the inspiration from positive role models is clearly appreciated by the learners.

I'm sorry about this Vanessa [the speaker apologises for any embarrassment she may cause the tutor] but that's where I would like to be in time: a dyslexic woman that has succeeded in doing something and you're giving something back. That's wow, you know!

The issue of assignments was less clear cut. We explored it in depth in the focus group research with dyslexic students. The majority were clear that the absence of course fees and exams or assignments was part of the initial attraction (compare Houghton, 1999), but then views split on whether they would want to opt in to assignments at some stage as their confidence grows, as Elaine and John reveal.

I actually don't like assignments or essays. I think that's why I do the adult education courses because I know it's hands on.

... maybe some sort of certificate at the end just ot say that you've been, you've passed this, or maybe dare I say it, a slight exam.

Social mix

The social bonds that are more easily formed when the students readily recognise something in common with their peers emerges as one of the most powerful enabling features of the Widening Provision project. The visually impaired students felt much more at ease among their peers.

... feel more at ease because the students are in the same boat and know how to help one another.

I do not feel foolish if I make mistakes and I am treated better by the other students. I feel I need the support of other visually impaired students.

Non-integrated courses provide me with more social contact and personal needs catered for better.

... [preferred] the lack of competition and equality in the speed of learning and performance.

These comments resonate clearly with the findings in the excellent paper by Ash and colleagues (1997). Reading the diaries, evaluation comments and focus group transcripts of the dyslexic students suggests that "enabling" might be too small a word. My co-researcher, Barbara Taylor, has described these moments as epiphanies.

I think my comment on the way home was that "at last I'd found a bunch of enlightened people. Hallelujah, somebody on the same wavelength."

You realise you're not on your own.

I enjoyed that first session very much, it's the first time I have sat with others having the same or similar problems.

I thought "I can't believe this lady [the tutor] has just lived my childhood and just knows how I feel about things."

... everyone on the course has the same thing in common. We can relate to everything that is said, we've all had the same form of experience.

Conclusion

Exclusive provision potentially offers mainstream quality and resources to groups of learners who are often excluded. By short-circuiting the issues that typically thwart attempts at integration, tutors are free to concentrate on meeting the particular needs of more narrowly defined groups. I believe one of the reasons the FEFC has struggled to make sense of this curriculum area is that it does not sufficiently distinguish the demarcations between different types of impairment and learning difficulty. The inspectors appear to blame teachers and colleges for not creating the inclusive learning match, but it could be that many LDD learners cannot be neatly fitted in to mainstream curricula. The sometimes contradictory criticisms unwittingly express this dialectic.

Tomlinson's world of inclusive learning is an idealised vision. He accepts that inclusion is not a static state of affairs but a dynamic goal to be aimed for and continuously re-evaluated. Can he also accept that fitting these learners into the mainstream learning environment will challenge fundamental assumptions about curriculum and indeed the very nature of intelligence or ability? How much more can we expect of hard-pressed and poorly paid tutors to deliver this vision? We should not necessarily measure the success of inclusive learning by the numbers of disabled students – or indeed other excluded groups – participating in mainstream post-16 education. A better measure is the extent to which adult learners are free to make informed choices about their learning (informed by some knowledge of themselves as resourceful and capable learners, informed about the different ways in which they might achieve their goals, informed about their rights as citizens).

The current emphasis on national basic skills and foundation awards do little more than offer new ways for would-be learners to fail at the things they are already well versed in failing at. By concentrating only on basic skills the intellectual and emotional needs of learners remain unsatisfied. Providing a safe educational space exclusively for their use offers them a unique opportunity to reverse the logic of earlier educational failure. In the frequently espoused (but arguably little practised) traditions of adult education they can be encouraged to negotiate a curriculum and outcomes that address their contemporary needs.

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Without and within: inclusion, identity and continuing education in a new Wales.

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There appear relationships between ideas of identity and social inclusion and exclusion. Those possessions and objects we gather about ourselves, ideas we might have about ourselves, the things we know and can do, will all relate to the extent to which we feel included or excluded by particular groups. After a brief discussion of ideas relating to the construction of identity and the complexity of the idea of inclusion within a bi-cultural environment we reflect on the role that adult and continuing education might, and does, play. In particular we try to develop ideas about identity within the context of post-assembly Wales, and particularly the way in which involvement in adult and continuing education might affect an individual's sense of personal, cultural and national identity.

Changing ideas of identity

Recent theoretical work assumes the constructed, rather than inherent, nature of identity. This is evident in cultural and aesthetic representations of individuals, communities and nations. This interest in ideas of identity and the 'subject' crosses disciplinary boundaries from archeology to the arts, and includes sociology, psychology and history. This section brings together a number of ideas primarily from literary theory, yet they are ideas which have been used within a range of disciplines.

Structuralism developed ideas of meaning as shared systems of signification and in which the 'isolated individual as the fount and origin of all meaning took a sharp knock' (Eagleton 1996: 93). Identity, rather than being something which existed prior to and outside of language, becomes something produced by it, evidenced by the individual traces within the structures of language.

Roland Barthes in The Death of the Author refers to writing not as a process of personal expression, or of finding or revealing oneself, but as 'that neutral, composite, oblique place where our subject slips away' (Barthes 1982: 142). Foucault also refers to writing 'freed from expression' (Foucault 1991: 102) and advances Barthes ideas by asserting that:

> *it is not enough to repeat the empty affirmation that the author has disappeared. Instead we must locate the space left empty ... follow the distribution of gaps and branches, watch for the openings.* (Foucault 1991: 105)

For Foucault therefore it is not the single death of a single author but its dissolution into the text. Henri Lefebvre in The Production of Space stresses the duality of identity and refers to the mirror in which the reflection becomes not 'what I am but the sign of what I am', (Lefebvre 1991: 185) a sign with a multiple range of signifiers and connotations and which implicitly does not have inherent content and meaning but rather an arbitrary signified.

As the possibility of a single secure identity, inherited at birth and developed within a personal and social narrative of progress, disappears over the horizon along with the utopias that such a possibility suggests could exist, the notion of identity as a construct, however dehumanising that may seem, gathers pace. David Harvey in The Condition of Postmodernity refers to the past as the foundation of individual and collective identity (Harvey 1990: 86), Lefebvre in The Production of Space to the monument as a symbol of collective and national identity (Lefebvre 1991: 220). Within postmodernism, however, the past is increasingly recycled as nostalgia, national identity is rolled out as a brand name for supposedly ethnic commodities (the Irish pub, Indian caftans) and the monuments which symbolise that past are repackaged as heritage. Oppositional political movements often cling to a *place* based identity as locations for resistance, yet in that process become part of the very fragmentation upon which mobile capitalism can feed (Harvey 1990: 303). The postmodern, fragmented subject, has been adopted by both the left and the right: by the left as able to wriggle free of the hegemony of global capitalism and a particularly western, white and male perspective, and by the right as a natural consequence of the deregulated free market. Identity is not something one is born with but something constructed or adopted.

This interest in the construction of identity and identities, underpinned by a rhetoric of consumer choice, can be perceived in representations of contemporary western life. Individuals choose to buy goods, clothes and cars with a particular brand name, they will make certain 'lifestyle choices' about housing and schools, they will select certain holiday destinations, all of which will construct, and project, a certain identity. In our professional lives the training in health and education, encourages a process of reflection, of projecting the self as another, a reflective practitioner, which can be studied and its behaviour modified.

The whole idea of a single perspective on anything, supported by the notion of a stable and singular identity, has become attached to a reactionary politics. Pierre Joris in 'Nomad Poetics' goes a step further and exhorts people to free themselves from 'the mummy/daddy language' (Joris 1998: 16), and asks 'why should that oedipal choice be the only possible or legitimate one'. Leaving aside the rhetorical flourish, Joris is making a very real point, that bi and multilingualism is more of a global norm than monolingualism, and positing that decision to use other languages as an available choice through which 'the author has multiplied, has lost its/his/her identity as a single subject' (Joris 1998: 14).

Welsh identity and inclusion

Issues of identity and inclusion in Wales have been topics of discussion and debate at various times over the last century but the question of what constitutes Welshness has become of wider concern and interest in recent years, particularly in the context of the opening of the Welsh Assembly in 1999. Those writing on the issue e.g. Fevre and Thompson 1999, Bowie 1993, generally agree that there is no single Welsh identity (and therefore no single culture within which to be included) but that it is based on diversity of experience, culture and language. Bowie says:

> *one is left not so much with a coherent notion of Welshness as with a sense of many conflicting and interlocking definitions of identity which actively compete for symbolic space and public recognition* (Bowie 1993: 169)

This article is not the place to review that substantial literature on Wales and Welsh nationalism produced this century, but the 3 Wales model put forward by Balsom in the early 1980s demonstrates the complexity of the issues. In this model the eastern part of Wales (and south Pembrokeshire) is dubbed British Wales, the industrial valleys of south Wales and the nearby towns of Swansea and Port Talbot are Welsh Wales, and the western part of Wales is 'Y Fro Gymraeg' (Welsh speaking Wales). In general, most of the inhabitants of 'British Wales' were assumed to see themselves as British rather than Welsh, and to be resistant to an increase in the use of the Welsh language. Those living in or coming from Welsh Wales, particularly the valleys, were seen as having a strong Welsh identity and a sense of a separate i.e. non-English cultural inheritance, but were in general not Welsh speaking. However, the attitude towards the use of the Welsh language was generally supportive and these areas have been a fertile breeding ground for Welsh-medium schools and Welsh language classes in the last thirty years. This area too showed strong support for devolution in the 1997 devolution referendum. The 'third Wales' – Y Fro Gymraeg – encompasses the areas of West Wales where the majority of the population is Welsh. There is a tendency to see this Wales as being the true Wales – the heartland - and to see Welshness and the Welsh language as both synonymous and the basis for a resistance to a perceived anglicisation. Although overall this three part division makes intuitive sense as a broad brush description of pre-devolution Wales in the 1970s, such a model would always have been riddled with anomalies. Seaside towns such as Bangor, Aberystwyth and Biwmaris for instance are geographically in Y Fro Gymraeg, but are often, although not exclusively, seen by those in the surrounding rural areas as 'English'. Parts of hitherto 'British Wales' are, in the aftermath of devolution, constructing a Welsh identity. Welsh, British and European identities coexist within the inhabitants of Wales. The profile of Welsh speakers is changing, as the 'incomer' who learns the Welsh language becomes commonplace. More people will know some Welsh (rather than some being fluent in Welsh and English and others in English only), and a bilingual society can become a reality, weaving both languages through cultural divides and in particular reinventing those symbols, as well as those geographical areas, which were seen, and saw themselves, as either 'Welsh' or 'English' as part of the process of developing a new culture within Wales.

It is worth listing some of the key pressures in the construction of identities in post-assembly Wales. They are both historical and local, contemporary and global. Some are specific to Wales, others more applicable to all developing countries. They include the post industrial revolution development of a Welsh identity typified by non-conformism and cultural activities centred around the language and literature of Wales, an identity which developed a more radical edge in the second half of the twentieth century. This 'high', Eisteddfodic Welsh culture also intersects with Welsh media culture and the development of an idea of 'Cool Cymru', a global brand name . The development of this identity has taken place within the context of a Britain losing its empire and the growth in influence of the European Union. Any Welsh identity which has emerged is not devoid of the usual influence of class and gender and, until recently at least, South Wales miners and steelworkers may have seen themselves as more part of an international working class than part of an emerging Welsh identity.

The notion of inclusion and exclusion in Wales, particularly the Welsh speaking areas, is therefore highly problematic and as well as referring to those who are traditionally seen as socially excluded on the ground of poverty, could also be taken to refer to people who are excluded from aspects of community life and whose job prospects are impaired through a lack of fluency in Welsh. Such people include those who were not brought up to speak Welsh at home and did not learn it at school. Many inhabitants of Wales born before 1960 would have received most of their education in English and might consequently lack the confidence to use Welsh in formal circumstances. It also includes those who have moved from other areas of Wales where Welsh is not widely spoken, and from other parts of the United Kingdom. (Interestingly, and anecdotally, those who move to Wales with a first language other than English, often use Welsh more readily than first language English speakers). Some of this group will be middle-class incomers who are generally well-off, often retired, articulate and vocal and used to a situation whereby their cultural norm was that of the community in which they lived. While they will be included in many social gatherings with others like themselves they may nevertheless be largely excluded from some community activities and social circles that are largely Welsh-speaking. This is not to deny the very real barriers that also exist for Welsh speakers who are also excluded from many Welsh cultural events through both social class and a linguistic competence in both Welsh and English which reflects a low standard of educational achievement.

The role of adult and continuing education

Adult and continuing education has long drawn on ideas of identity and inclusion as a way of engaging new learners and a way of using local resources as part of the learning processes. It therefore explicitly draws on the twin structurating factors of identity; time (as expressed in personal, community and national histories) and geographical space as in a particular place or locale or in national boundaries. Yet Anthony Giddens, amongst others, claims that within late capitalism, peoples are increasingly disembedded, across space and time, from their locale and the myths, traditions and personal and family histories that go with it (Giddens 1990: 16).

A brief examination of the curriculum offered by a typical university continuing education department and anecdotal evidence from others is telling. The emphasis has shifted from social history to local history, from the study of literature to self expression through creative writing (often of the most confessional sort), from sociology to new age philosophy. Crudely, the courses offer the opportunity to understand and construct an individual identity, rather than offering an opportunity to study and understand the histories and geographies of societies. Some might see this as a process of radicalisation, tearing the subject(ed) free from histories dominated by the idea of the nation state and a phallocentric epistemology; others as a process of oppression, the consequence of the fragmentation of society by a global capitalism which tears the individual away from national, communal and familial ties. This is not an either/or, and both individual students and departments of continuing education will seek to simultaneously take part in a global society and reclaim their own local and communal identity. Courses offered by many continuing education departments, delivered by diverse methods, explicitly encourage the flexible accumulation of both skills and knowledge and the credentials that follow their accumulation. Often developed within the liberal rhetoric of equality of opportunity through increasing access, modes of delivery and participation seem to mimic the increasing casualisation and pliability of a flexible workforce (Harvey 1990:190). While its structures can be located in a market driven economy the increased flexibility does encourage the combination of subjects and disciplines which match the actual and aspirational identities of the student. The student is therefore able, some would say encouraged, to use adult and continuing education to develop their identity, and the conditions under which it is offered make that part of a lifestyle.

Students, identities and continuing education

For those living in this 'new Wales' issues of identity are often extremely salient, and it is clear that many people have a view of themselves as in some measure 'constructing' their own identity. This is perhaps particularly true of those who have moved into the area, but also applies to others who are perhaps re-evaluating their ideas of Welshness and their own Welsh identities. As part of a centre for continuing education which offers many courses both in Welsh language teaching , and subjects such as Anglo-Welsh literature and local history we were interested in seeing how our students viewed their experiences of these classes. Were they primarily seen as a means of acquiring useful skills and knowledge or did they also relate to students' sense of identity and inclusion in the local community? We collected information on this by means of comments on students' evaluation forms, and also via group interviews with two groups of students who were attending Welsh language classes. It is very clear from comments made by them, in the interviews in particular, that learning Welsh was clearly linked with questions of inclusion and identity; for instance, A. says

I seem to have a new belonging now. I live on my own and have done since my husband died. I found that just meeting in a Welsh class would lead on to other things socially. It led me into going to a Welsh chapel and to Merched y Wawr so my band of friends is growing larger and is still growing larger. I find so much pleasure in meeting people because there is a sort of community spirit amongst the Welsh .'

This mirrors a comment made by Bowie on her experience of learning Welsh and that of others she knew:

There is a feeling among many learners of having joined an elite club and using Welsh enforces a sense of solidarity which belonging to a small supportive group can engender. (Bowie 1984: 178)

Some of the students, particularly those who have more leisure through being recently retired see Continuing Education classes as giving them an opportunity to develop different aspects of their identity, or to work on one that they feel has somehow been latent in the busy years of bringing up a family and working; for instance, B.

I was born in Wales of Welsh parents, but spent most of my working life in England, so for me it's very much a question of mulching my roots, and diving into the Welsh culture so it's closely connected with who I am, because to a degree I feel I've been deprived of the language of my grandparents, my great grandparents and so on, and although I'm very fond of English language I wanted to reclaim my particular roots and I also do family history. I'm interested in Welsh culture as well and I do a Welsh literature class, which focuses on Welsh poetry.

It's interesting that in this latter example learning Welsh is part of a wider package that encompasses other continuing education classes. A similar point is also made by J, who sees clear connections in her own life between attending classes and her links with the wider community.

Well I've been doing Welsh since I retired 12 years ago. I started thinking Welsh would be a hobby but gradually I got more into it, began to like it very much, began to meet the people, and began to understand more of the culture, and that led me to study more, until finally this year I sat my 'A' level.'

It isn't only language classes that enable students to feel part of their community but also increased knowledge about where they live. For instance one student commenting on the value to him of a Welsh history class, says:

Mr X's (tutor) enthusiasm has led me to read much deeper into Welsh history. I have learned so much from the lectures and can now hold my head up with the 'locals'.

Even those who have always lived in the area will have experienced changes in the way that their own culture and language is valued in their own lifetime, and may feel that there is some 'catching up' to do. D., for example, says in relation to his attendance at local history classes:

I never had lessons in the grammar school on local history, or Welsh history either, so the opportunity to study local history is interesting and extremely valuable. It helps one to feel part of the local community, and perhaps as a result of that to be more ready to contribute to it.'

Conclusion

We have tried to demonstrate in this paper a link between theories of identity, particularly those developed from postmodern perspectives, and the experience of continuing education students. Students may engage with education to meet different individual aims and aspirations, but many of them also see the value of lifelong learning in helping them to attain goals of inclusion and community involvement. We have looked at the particular context of Wales, where there have been demographic, cultural and political changes in recent years, and issues of inclusion and exclusion are complex. Similar changes are of course to be found in many other parts of the British Isles, and offer those involved in lifelong learning many opportunities for playing a part in facilitating the development of an inclusive society.

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Inclusion and the denial of difference in the education of adults

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How this paper originated

When the theme for this year's SCUTREA conference was first announced, our initial reaction was that we had little or nothing to say on the topic of inclusion. We recognised the irony of our reluctance to engage with the topic, since each of us occupies a management position in a university which places widening participation in higher education at the centre of its mission, leading us both to become well practised in the art of producing institutional documents and bids for project funding which are constructed in the discourse of social inclusion. As we explored our resistance further, we identified a shared unease about the contradictions embedded in policy initiatives concerning social inclusion. We also articulated distaste towards the tendency for the metaphor of inclusion to suggest a process of extending boundaries on a horizontal plane, to render invisible social divisions and stratification, and hence to deny difference and conflict over resources and values.

The conversations we conducted as we attempted to make sense of the negative connotations we attached to the concept of inclusion took us back through analyses in which we have engaged in past SCUTREA conferences. In our earlier work, we have examined the use of metaphors in the context of the education of adults (Miller and Edwards 1996), and recently we have explored extensively metaphors of space and place (Edwards and Miller 1999; Edwards and Usher 2000). We have also focused on the interplay of groups, tribes and invisible colleges amongst the professional communities to which we belong (Edwards and Usher 1994; Miller 1994). In a recent paper in which we use auto/biographical methodology to analyse aspects of identity in postmodernity (Edwards and Miller 2000), we explore and acknowledge the importance of our own membership of subcultural groups in our personal and professional activities. We both recognise the centrality of affective relationships with others in these groups in our everyday lives, the pleasure we derive from shared interaction in such groups, and the consciousness of the fact that our scholarly endeavours and publications are part of ensemble playing in these groups. But as we reflected on our experience of the 'we' feeling that our membership of and inclusion in, for example, the invisible college which is constituted in SCUTREA, we realised that including ourselves and our friends in such subcultural groups inevitably involved the exclusion of others. Furthermore, we both react in irritation when we feel that we are being included in someone else's collective 'we' without our consent. Our discussion took us into an attempt to find a way of theorising these aspects of experience and hence to this paper.

From equity to inclusion

As part of its rationale for widening participation in post-school education and in lifelong learning generally, the Labour government in the United Kingdom has placed strong emphasis on social inclusion (DfEE 1998 and 1999). What in previous times might have been constructed as a debate over social equity, equality or justice has given way to a discussion about social exclusion and inclusion. Those who are at the margins of society are being encouraged to include themselves. One of the prime means by which this is expected to be accomplished is through the provision of lifelong learning opportunities. The provision of learning opportunities is seen as a way of supporting social inclusion because it provides progression pathways, in particular to employment. Moreover, the provision of learning opportunities is itself seen as inclusive because it enables more people to participate in learning.

Although there has been some critical commentary on inclusion (Preece 1999, Field 2000), it might be argued that it is difficult to be against it. Like lifelong learning itself, inclusion generally is constructed as and constructs itself as a 'good' thing, a sign of virtue. Many critics are therefore arguing that policy and practice are insufficiently inclusive. Our argument, by contrast, is to suggest that inclusion is at least problematic, although this risks being positioned as elitist and excluding. Yet the notion of inclusion precisely entails the work of exclusion. The denial of its own co-implication in excluding practices is the focus of this paper. We wish to provide a reading that challenges the view that the commitment to inclusion in education, training and employment is of itself an inherent good. To provide such a reading we draw upon post-structuralist philosophy to suggest that while inclusion is largely constructed within a philosophy of identity that devalues difference, positioning it within a philosophy of difference highlights the ambivalences at play and their powerful effects in developing the policies and practices of inclusion.

The paper is in two parts. First, we outline our argument for conceiving inclusion within a philosophy of difference, and examine the denial of difference that framing inclusion within a philosophy of identity entails. Here we should note that this involves making room for philosophy within the study of the education of adults, and acknowledge that different philosophies include and exclude particular practices and contexts. Second, we explore the implications of this, drawing on recent policy documents dealing with the education of adults. We wish to argue that inclusion is unachievable inasmuch as it only has meaning in relation to its opposite, exclusion.

Philosophies of inclusion/including philosophy

Any dichotomy involves simplification and is the basis for that most successful of academic evolutionary forms, the straw person. If anything provides evidence of Baudrillard's suggestion of the dissolution of the real by the hyperreal through the practices of simulation (1996), it is academic discourse with its attempts to carve out positions in opposition to others.

A philosophy of identity can be found in universalist and humanist discourses that make claims for all. Identity implies sameness, and it is in the recognition of sameness that certain categories evolve – humanity, the globe, the nation, society, 'we'. Claims based upon such a philosophy rely on transcendental categories to which all belong, whatever differences may exist between individuals and groups. Thus, we are all human, despite different genders, ethnicities, class backgrounds, sexual orientations and generations. The latter are surface phenomena, but scratch us and we all bleed; we are all human under the skin. This philosophy has been very important to the underpinning of liberal and humanist discourses to promote equality, and should not be under-estimated for some of the positive social changes it has supported.

Yet this approach has costs. As a philosophy of identity it supports integrationist approaches, and therefore raises questions as to what and who is being integrated by whom. In treating our embodied and embedded selves as surface phenomena, this approach can make powerful calls to, for instance, our humanity, the effects of which can be to marginalise those lived experiences that might be said to constitute us. In this process there is a denial of the powerful work such an approach does in marking out a centre into which others should be integrated.

The notion of inclusion is conceived largely within a philosophy of identity, in universalist and humanist discourses which position those who are excluded as causes for concern. In such discourses, exclusion can be overcome or transcended by changes in social and economic policies and practices; inclusion conquers exclusion. As with integration, however, we need to ask who is included in what. Preece argues that 'new discourses for inclusion do not seek to include … existing identities, but choose to encourage them [excluded groups] to revalue what had previously been denied – forms of education and training which would make them "higher" learners' (1999: 18). However, unlike the metaphor of vertical relationships embedded in notions of equality, inclusion carries connotations of relationships along a horizontal plane. and suggests a centre towards which everyone must be given opportunities to move. The promotion of change in social relationships conceptualised as being arranged in layers in a pyramid involves a flattening of the overall pyramid shape, which means a noticeable change for everyone in the formation. In contrast, a change on a flat plane (or indeed a level playing field) which involves moving an outside circumference (or perhaps requires those in the outer layers to squeeze up a bit) is likely to be imperceptible to those at the centre.

Those at the margins of the economy and society must be given the opportunity to be included, with the danger that without such inclusive practices they may be further marginalised or, indeed, if we still believed in a flat earth, fall off the edge. It is not entirely surprising that concern for inclusion has become a dimension of national policy at just that point at which globalising processes are subjecting the nation state to ever increasing strains and there is a debate about society 'falling apart' (Edwards and Usher 2000).

In this discourse the excluded are identified as deficient and/or deviant. To include is to overcome deficiency and/or deviancy, to be harnessed to the project of the centre. In the case of the Labour government, this project is one of modernisation and renewal, with the working population positioned as the human resources and the nation – reconfigured as a learning society – being governed in similar ways to those found within learning organisations (Edwards 1999). Discourses of learning organisations and of a learning society, framed within a philosophy of identity like discourses of inclusion, deny the Other – in the sense of keeping silent about it – and position the Other as marginal or deviant, in the sense of putting in place practices that seek to tie people to the centre, to 'govern their souls' (Rose 1991). The difference that is denied is the embodied and embedded nature of living subjects, and the possibility that there may be contestation of the project within which we are to be included. As some have said of lifelong learning policy, there is a danger of compulsion, with the implication that not all would want to be included in what is on offer (Coffield 1999).

This reading of inclusion already assumes a different location. A reading from within a philosophy of identity may emphasise the need for diversity to be recognised within an inclusive framing, but it cannot frame its own exclusions and the denial of difference it inscribes. This is Preece's position; she argues that 'the discourse of inclusion therefore must mean a valuing of difference if mass educational participation is to be realised' (1999: 23). In other words, inclusion can still overcome exclusion, but diversity needs to recognised and worked with. Our location is different. We are informed by the work of Derrida (1981) and his view that to open a space is to deny the other spaces that make that opening possible; the space opened depends upon the spaces that are closed by the opening. Derrida is referring to the paradoxical and relational dimensions of language, to the dependence for meaning upon the Other, that which is denied. In other words, terms only mean something in relation to other terms, about which they are often silent.

In relation to our present discussion, the implication is that the notion of inclusion only has meaning in relation to a notion of exclusion; they are binary. Here, unlike in the philosophy of identity, in which inclusion will transcend exclusion because the terms are dichotomous, traces of exclusion are to be found in the practices of inclusion. As Natter and Jones, summarising Derrida, put it, 'the outside of any category is already found to be resident within, permeating the category from the inside through its traceable presence-in-absence within the category'(1997: 146). To talk of inclusion as a binary opposite of exclusion, the one overcoming the other, is to be positioned in ways that deny the very acts of exclusion entailed by forms of inclusion. The task then becomes one of engaging in a struggle over the criteria of inclusion-exclusion rather than pursuing inclusion as a policy goal. To bring to the fore the paradoxical inter-relationship of inclusion-exclusion requires investigation of the micro-practices of social life and their powerful effects, the specific forms they take and the possibilities for alternative projects to those of the centre. It demands questioning of the centre/margin as a metaphor through which to frame social practices. And so it deconstructs inclusion as an inherently worthwhile goal.

To include or not to include? Is that a question?

Here we can only provide brief illustration of our argument. There is a wide range of topics from the literature of the education of adults with which we could have engaged – for example, participation, communities of practice and bodies of knowledge. In relation to each it would be possible to explore the practices of in/exclusion that are in play. What forms of lifelong learning are in/ex-cluded in the current UK context? What communities of practice are in/ex-cluded in lifelong learning? What constitutes the subject, the body of knowledge, of lifelong learning? Each text will inscribe its own in/ex-clusions. For the purposes of this paper, we wish to illustrate our argument with a reading of some recent policy papers. This will not be exhaustive – for one thing, unlike non-renewable resources, texts cannot be exhausted, even if their reading can be exhausting!

Field (2000) considers the focus on social inclusion to have emerged in the European Union in the early 1980s as an alternative to a concern with 'poverty'. This focus has since become more widespread – internationalised through bodies such as OECD (1998) and, more parochially, a focus of policy of the Labour government since its election in 1997. For many, the concern is that unless lifelong learning policy addresses issues of inclusion as well as those of economic competitiveness, exclusion will increase – or in an alternative discourse, inequality will increase.

However, attempts to inscribe social inclusion in lifelong learning policy also, as we have suggested, exclude. Thus, for instance, the European Commission's White Paper on teaching and learning (CEC 1995) which was central to the 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning identified as one of its five objectives the fighting of social exclusion. Yet it located this fight as one to overcome the ways in which young people are shut out of the school system. Exclusion was from the formal schooling system and its impact was on young people. For those with an interest in lifelong learning, the obvious exclusion of a fuller range of learning opportunities and those other than the young as a matter of policy concern is striking.

The OECD's six-nation study (1998) of social inclusion and lifelong learning is somewhat more adventurous in its evaluation and establishes a list of best practice that embraces a wider sense of who is to be included and to what. Yet it still works within a logic of identity, as it indicates that through such measures all can be included, a view also to be found in the Kennedy Report (1997) on participation in further education in the UK. Such policy statements are to be welcomed in the sense they engage with issues of diversity. However, they deny the play of difference in their view that all should want to be included – a moral imperative that denies deviancy, apathy and bloody-mindedness. They also promote the logic of the need for more and more relevance to increasingly diverse groups of learners, as though this were achievable and desirable. The desire here might be argued to be for mastery, for even as 'we' become more responsive and inclusive, 'we' remain the centre, extending the embrace to ensure the centre holds and things do not fall apart. Thus, for instance, in the UK government's White Paper on lifelong learning, the initial sentence of the Executive Summary is explicit as to the goal: 'Our vision is to build a new culture of learning which will underpin national competitiveness and personal prosperity, encourage creativity and innovation and help build a cohesive society' (DfEE 1999: 6).

To build this culture, there is a need to 'tackle social exclusion at its roots within the education system both before and beyond the school leaving age' (DfEE 1999: 12). Here the obvious exclusions are those factors other than education which contribute to social exclusion, such as housing, employment, and health. Positioning education as the root of exclusion and maybe even the route to inclusion suggests a simplified causal relationship that might make sense to education ministers trying to secure resources from treasuries, but excludes possible alternative analyses of the situation. Perhaps more startlingly in this policy document is the exclusion of higher education as a part of the lifelong learning policy domain. Given the privilege inscribed in and through higher education, this exclusion is surprising, although it is probable that it is precisely its privileged position that resulted in it not being included.

Making a difference?

We have argued for a deconstructive reading of discourses of inclusion, as this enables the continuing play of difference to be framed. Lifelong learning both contributes to forms of in/ex-clusion and enables form of in/ex-clusion in learning opportunities. What this suggests is that those of us working in this domain can no longer assume that we are on the side of the angels, but that we have to negotiate and renegotiate the complexity and ambivalence of our practices and their effects. Here there is no answer, only the ongoing play of uncertainty. Like inclusion, lifelong learning can be located in philosophies both of identity and of difference. For us, both inclusion and lifelong learning need to be subject to deconstruction to enable the continuing play of deviancy, difference and Otherness. Others might want to play a different game, of course.

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Adding life to your years: transformative learning for older people at the Irish Museum Of Modern Art[1]

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Introduction

Life expectancy has increased by 30 years during the past century. By 2150 the percentage of the world's population over 65 will be 30%, up from 7% at present. A high percentage of older people are actively involved in adult education (Lamdin and Fugate, 1997, p. 85).

During the United Nations International Year of Older Persons (1999) the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), with EU SOCRATES funding, undertook a study of its education work with members of St. Michael's Parish Active Retirement Association, a group of older local residents. The aim of the research was to identify the learning outcomes of the programme and how that learning was facilitated.

The Irish Museum of Modern Art is housed in the Royal Hospital, Dublin, founded in 1684 by the Viceroy to Charles II as a home for retired soldiers. It continued in that role for almost 250 years. The Irish Government restored the building and it was re-opened as the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 1991.

Research Methodology

Interviews and focus groups were held to gather quantitative and qualitative data and conceptual mapping (Deshler, 1990) was used in the analysis. This method allowed the researchers to represent sets of concepts that are embedded in the data in map form. The concepts were summarised under various headings; thoughts, feelings, values that arise in the interviews. Reflection on the maps revealed new connections and relationships between the concepts.

Findings

In the group researched there were eleven women and two men. Six were over 78. Four were single and nine married, four of whom were widowed. All the single and widowed were women. Seven lived alone. Eleven of the thirteen members left formal school after their primary education and all worked as police, shop assistants, factory workers and catering and clerical staff.

In the interviews people spoke about joining the programme because they were asked; they were looking for something to do; they had time. Some mentioned the desire to improve conditions for older people or the need to make new friends after a long period of isolation, and a wish to become involved in a new prestigious national institution opening on their doorstep. Two sets of concepts arising from the research are briefly outlined here – well being and identity development.

Well-being of participants

The older people spoke eloquently about the programme contributing to their health and keeping them active. They expect, as a result, to live longer and healthier lives and contrast this with the lives of many older people who stay at home, isolated, watching television, becoming melancholy and frequently unwilling to leave their homes. This is important to them because *it stops you from getting Alzheimer's. I'm hoping it does.* Or another asserted;

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[1] This paper is based on the findings of a report co-authored with Anne Gallagher, NUI, Maynooth (Fleming and Gallagher, 1999)

It has added life to my years....I was getting older and I suppose feeling, you now, older and useless...and I wanted still to do things...

Inactivity, many were convinced, would lead to melancholy;

Well, I've learned to use my brain, and one thing I'm not sitting back and letting me head go numb 'cos I find if you sit back and do nothing and look at the telly you go brain dead. You would, you'd go melancholy...

Giggling, growing and sexuality: Towards identity development

The Royal Hospital, a reminder of a British history in Ireland, was also part of the local place in which they grew up. Then it was a 'no-go area' but now is a place of which they are proud. In reclaiming a national heritage and local institution long out of bounds, they may be also reclaiming and setting free that within themselves which was out of bounds, unaccessed and undiscovered.

Through reminiscence and art the participants revisited their childhood. They established new relations with teachers and artists. They did things not allowed in their youth or at school. Though they were more constrained by age and infirmity they found a freedom to experience the excitement of the unknown and unpredictable in lives, which paradoxically, are expanding and breaking free of (long-internalised) restrictions. They speak both of fulfilling dreams and of doing things undreamed of. They are growing while playing, having fun, messing with clay and sometimes giggling at the art.

School is frequently spoken about as closing down options;

I went to school in 1941...you were never ever brought to museums you were never brought to anything...the only thing I ever did in school was cooking...sewing and once a month brought walking to confession.

Leaving school early imposed a ceiling on their education, career and life prospects. Some spoke of growing up and living in difficult economic circumstances; having to start work early in life, working hard and all this always circumscribed by family responsibilities. Their engagement with the museum was an opportunity to redress matters, to have a childhood and reclaim lost ground.

Through the art they speak of being more aware of the world around them and see it in new ways, *it's like a window being opened.* They link art and the ability to see things differently with awareness of poverty and homelessness.

I had to go on the bus down to Kingsbridge...Last year when I was there there was a small little bush and someone was sleeping under it and I see now they have a bit of plastic over it you know and it sort of activates your mind ...I'd love to do something but what can you do? You don't know whether they're sleeping under all these blankets or what and they were soaking...and I suppose if you were good enough you could paint what you feel about that situation.

Many are finding their voice for the first time; expressing opinions; talking of their experiences in an atmosphere free from threat of humiliation and punishment.

It was really great because you had the freedom of expression, you could express yourself without feeling embarrassed. You know I'd go other places...and you were afraid, you were always afraid to speak out you know...

Some have spoken at public gatherings about their art and memories. Others have found a voice with which to challenge injustice.

I'm a person that doesn't like injustice...I used to sit there, and I'd be kind of all inside I'd be thinking if I could only get up and say something about it. But now I can...if I feel there's something not right I'll say 'well I don't think that's right,'... I'm able to stand up now and say it. Years ago I wouldn't have had the guts.

This increased sense of agency was a common experience.

Horizons and the realm of the possible are expanding for those whose younger lives were circumscribed by gender, economic circumstances, the society of the time and family responsibilities. They now see themselves as more powerful, more empowered. They are developing their identities. This is illustrated by their comments on how sexuality and their views about the human body have changed. By looking at and thinking about the human body in art and discussing and sharing their reactions, many have come to be more at ease and open with nudity and sexuality. When the participants first came to IMMA they were like giggly children. They are no longer shocked and are less embarrassed. The merits of different nudes can be discussed and they don't see anything wrong in them anymore. The body and sexuality are seen as natural, it's natural it's just like part of life and a part of modern art.

The newfound celebration of freedom and imagination is transmitted to a younger generation; in the way they play with grandchildren (using ideas from the workshops to construct games); in bringing them to the museum and asking them what they see in the artwork; in encouraging them to experiment with painting and drawing. Grandchildren and others are beginning to take an interest in and reveal a talent for art.

Discussion

The findings briefly presented point to significant consequences for well-being of participants and their learning. They have major implications too for national policy, for the policy and practice of IMMA and for educators working with older adults.

Adult education and well-being

Though research indicates that the brain continues to lose cells as it ages, it appears to have an inherent plasticity, i.e. it has a modifiable and regenerative capacity (Boucouvalas, 1988, p. 16). The readiness on the part of group members to learn, explore, and work towards their aspirations is a powerful reminder of the 'lifelong' nature of learning.

Strong and moving stories are told in the interviews about the realities of life for older people. References to 'melancholy' and the experience the connection between health, mind, art and learning.

Social and productive activities are good predictors of longevity according to research undertaken in America (Glass, 1999, p. 478); Finland (Kaplan, 1988); Sweden (Bygren, 1996; Fratiglioni, 2000). In other research a link has been established between educational attainment and a reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease (Stern, 1994; Albert, 1995) and a poor or limited social network increases the risk of dementia by 60% (Fratiglioni, 2000). Living alone is contrasted with being alone – the latter being detrimental to health (Berkman, risk of Alzheimer's disease indicate how they 2000, pp. 1291-1292). Adults who occupy multiple social roles in later life have been shown to have higher levels of well-being (Adelmann, 1994). Adult education has serious health implications – longevity and well-being.

The stories of the older people and the supporting academic research findings have social and political implications for Government policy in culture, education, social welfare and health. Participation in programmes such as this is life-enhancing, health-promoting and people believe, correctly, that they live longer as a result. They delight in their resulting well-being.

Adult education and identity development

The change in the role and image of the museum and art gallery in the late twentieth century has been characterised by Benson (1989) as a transition from temple to forum. In a museum as temple, the visitor is worshipper and in awe of the exhibitions. People look in only one direction to worship; do not interact and are disconnected from each other and from the object worshipped. A forum, in contrast, is a space for citizens to meet for discussion and debate, where opinions and multiple voices can be heard; a space in which people interact and connect. Openness is the defining quality of the forum. Reclaiming the heritage of the Royal Hospital is about transforming what for many is a symbol of British power and domination (rather like the temple) into a space open to and owned by ordinary people.

Art allows people to make meaning and to construct an experience with the artwork. Making meaning (Greene, 1995) is central to the developmental and learning process in the lives of individuals; one that continues throughout the life span as new experiences, challenges, questions and crises are encountered.

Laughter and humour play an important part in the group's experience. The power of humour to break through barriers of fear, anxiety and tension is well-recognised. It is part of well-being. Their laughter is a way of defusing the discomfort, the anxiety of confronting images and artworks that may be embarrassing. It allows them to look at something they may not otherwise confront and makes it easier to return to it and look again. In the workshops laughter releases creativity.

Opportunities to revisit childhood, have fun and play, provide important opportunities for development and learning. According to Erikson (1977, p. 191) in play one is;

> *on vacation from social and economic reality - or, as is most commonly emphasised: (in play) he does not work....even the most strenuous and dangerous play is by definition not work.*

Erikson clearly identifies how taking our time in trifling, in dallying, we lazily thumb our noses at time which is our slave driver (Erikson, p. 191). This is both developmental and therapeutic.

For many of the older people, brought up in an era in which looking at images of the naked body was thought to be sinful, museums and art galleries were places where young teenagers could see nudes. It is an appropriate completion of the circle that the museum now provides a place and context in which to deal with sexuality, to confront, to stand in front of that which previously some were inclined to run past.

The adults on this programme have engaged in the process of their own development; they have consistently worked on their own identities, who they are. Erik Erikson (1977) spoke of achieving a sense of identity as the main task of adolescence. Many of this group left school early, began work in their teen years and started a life of adult responsibilities before others from a different social background had completed school or university. Participants' references to growing up now and having been old before their time bear out this idea that in IMMA they have got a chance to reclaim a missed opportunity to grow. They had to navigate another path toward maturity, one that is not always the most conducive to growing and maturing since adult responsibilities intervene before the individual may be quite ready for them.

In this experience at IMMA they have revisited the task of achieving a sense of identity. It is here that the programme achieves its spectacular success. It has provided precisely the environment in which adults of any age can explore who they are, what they believe in, and what they wish to do with their lives and relationships.

James Marcia (1980) called this process of questioning a developmental moratorium. It is characterised by two things: the leaving aside of responsibilities and commitments and engaging in a process of wondering and questioning. Both of these activities are part of the experience of this programme. The programme is a process of development for the participants. It allows people to step away from commitments to ideas, beliefs and attitudes in politics, religion, sexuality, etc. and engage in a process of wondering what beliefs, ideas and values to hold. The time given to the programme and the unhurried pace are important in this context; these are not tasks which can be rushed. It is ironic that working with older people whom one might think were working in a more limited time frame than younger adults, there was no time constraint. This was not a semester, a pilot, a year but an eight year engagement between the institution and the group. Time may be a crucial ingredient in this kind of learning.

Such a developmental experience facilitates the emergence of the mind-set required to live in the modern world. The participants are well situated to cope with and find a space for themselves in a modern culture which makes profound demands on the mental capabilities of each person (Kegan, 1994).

Throughout this research we noted the theme of connectedness as it permeates the activities and impact of the IMMA programme. In his work on human development Robert Kegan (1994, p. 217) identifies the two 'fundamental longings' of connection and separateness. In the lifelong activity of meaning-making the processes of integration and differentiation of the two longings occur again and again. Without outlining in detail the importance of these processes, we can state that the participants on the course have achieved an integration of these longings. They have achieved this by developing self-reliance on the one hand and connection on the other. Opportunities have been provided for integration and differentiation. This has allowed the participants to develop new ways of connecting with the world and has also fostered identity development which strengthens their individuality and autonomy. They are both more connected and more self-reliant. To put it more correctly: they have achieved a connected self-reliance. This refers again to the link with well-being as a connected life is life-enhancing.

In relating to younger members of their families, for example, by introducing them to art and by being more relaxed about play, questioning, nudity, they are contributing at the family level to broader cultural and social change. In the activism they demonstrate in this arena, and in their ability to act out of their new sense of self, their development can be described as transformative.

However, the emphasis on critical reflection as a rational, analytical, cognitive and social process, usually associated with Mezirow (1996), was not easily identified. What is clear is that a more creative, intuitive, emotional process was involved in this experience (Scott, 1997; Grabove, 1997, p 90). This research underlines the need to broaden the base of transformation theory which gives most significance to rational thinking and critical reflection. It is suggested here that because the medium of the project was an experiential engagement with modern art the learning was less inclined to be oriented to critical social theory, enlightenment and changing frames of reference but more concerned with 'expansion of consciousness or even a change in personality' (Grabove, 1997, p. 92) and other intuitive and subjective processes (Taylor, 1998, pp. 33-38). If transformational learning takes place in both rational and extrarational processes, in both cognitive and unconscious modes then this has implications for the development of theory, the teaching of adults and research.

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Will adult learning ever be popular?

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The lack of concern for how the economical, political and cultural structure in society influence adult education is reflected in the North American debate on the future of adult education ... Reading the debate, one gets a picture of the adult educator with a firm grip on the rudder keeping the vessel on the right course. However, no-one seems to ask ***where the wind and the waves are coming from***. (Rubenson, 1980: 13) (our emphasis)

What's the problem?

We have been aware for some time that there is a 'pressure of the new' within the academic profession. This is especially true in the field of lifelong learning just at this moment in time. During the first three years of the Labour government elected in 1997, policy initiatives have come thick and fast. These have included the establishment and reports of the National Advisory Group on Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning (NAGCELL) (Fryer, 1997), a Green Paper (DfEE, 1998) and a White Paper (DfEE, 1999b), the publication of a prospectus for the Learning and Skills Councils which will replace the existing Training and Enterprise Councils (DfEE, 1999b), and the important work of the National Skills Task Force (DfEE, 2000). There have also been the announcements of plans for the University for Industry (Ufl, now to be referred to as 'learndirect, and incorporating the national telephone helpline of the same name). However, with the important exceptions of Individual Learning Accounts and the telephone helpline, most of these initiatives have tended to locate the problem of establishing ligelong learning as a 'supply-side' problem. Less effort has been expended in thinking about how demand can be stimulated and where the motivation to learn comes from.

This paper consciously seeks to go back over a quarter of a century of intellectual history and in particular to review the relevance of Allen Tough's concept of the 'adult learning project', and the work of the 'New' Sociology of Education to the brave new world of lifelong learning. It therefore seemed appropriate to begin the article with an equally 'historical' quote from Rubenson which establishes the perspective of the paper from its outset. It will be our purpose in this paper to argue that 'where the wind and waves are coming from' is determined by two apparently contradictory factors:

- those social and economic forces referred to as 'globalisation' but more properly described as the development of a global information network society (Castells, 1996) and the development of a two-thirds-one third society (Lash, 1994: 130; Castells, 1996: 102/3) of socially included and excluded;
- the lives of social actors in which the innate curiosity and intelligence of the human being gives 'learning' a different set of meanings from those which it possesses in the professional and policy discourse of 'lifelong learning'.

It is, furthermore, our contention that a fresh eye for the 'learning' which takes places beyond the realm and reach of formal educational institutions can re-awaken interests in another apparently forgotten corner of adult education studies – the curriculum, and 'context of knowledge, culture and power' (Keddie, 1984: 79) in which it exists. In the attempt to involve more and more people in 'lifelong learning' we should not lose sight of the force of Michael Young's core statement of the concerns of the 'New' Sociology of Education:

Sociologists seem to have forgotten ... that education is not a product like cars or *bread, but a selection and organisation from the available knowledge at a particular time which involved conscious or unconscious choices.* (Young, 1971: 24)

This statement can be taken as referring to adult educators and trainers who have never known as well as their sociological colleagues who may have once known. Young draws too on an earlier source – Raymond Williams' (1961: 125) dictum that 'what is thought of as "an education" (is) in fact a particular selection, a set of emphases and omissions'.

Participation Studies

The general assumption in the academic literature on adult learning has been that the non-participation in organised learning activities of a majority of the adult population is a problem. This approach dominates Courtney's (1992) account of the 'subject' (which he calls 'PAE', or participation in adult education), in which he moves from psychological explanations of the phenomenon to more social accounts, in which participation in organised learning is seen as related to participation in other forms of social life (voluntary organisations, sporting groups, Parent Teacher Associations and so on). From a UK perspective, the most important trajectory lies in the policy debate leading up to the recent British government White Paper 'Learning to Succeed' (DfEE, 1999a). Sargant et al (1997) adopt the rhetorical claim of a 'learning divide', in which Britain is again, as in Victorian times, 'two nations' (of those who do and do not participate in lifelong learning).

With the publication of the Kennedy Report (FEFC, 1997) and the election of a Labour government in 1997 committed to 'lifelong learning', the notion of 'widening participation' in all forms of post-compulsory education became a band-wagon, at least in rhetorical terms, which impacted to varying degrees on most of the publications referred to in the opening paragraph of this paper. In practical terms, the effects were less marked. For example, regular quarterly reviews of workplace education and training (the Labour Force Survey) have shown that training activity increased from 10.5% of the workforce to 15.9% between 1986 and 1999, only 1.1% of this growth took place during the 1990s (DfEE, 2000: 20). While the cumulative effects of such initiatives as the Trade Union Learning Fund, the Adult and Community Learning Fund, Widening Provision in further education and in university adult continuing education have been considerable, and have done a good deal for morale among adult educators, the core of all provision (FE, HE and local authority adult education) continues to be dominated by learners who are, on average, younger, better educated and more affluent than the population as a whole.

A 'Tough' furrow to plough?

This lop-sided participation in lifelong learning relates to our first point about participation being a question of 'participation in what?', and this relationship will be taken up again later in the paper. For the moment we wish to address the whole area from a different historical perspective. Allen Tough in his seminal work *The adult's learning projects* (Tough, 1971 and 1979), based on extensive field-work by a team of Canadian researchers, made some very remarkable claims, for example:

Almost everyone undertakes at least one or two major learning efforts a year, and some individuals undertake as many as 15 or 20. The median is eight learning projects a year, involving eight distinct areas of knowledge and skill. (...)
About 70% of all learning projects are planned by the learner himself, who seeks help and subject matter from a variety of acquaintances, experts, and printed sources. Other learning projects rely on a group or instructor, on private lessons or on some nonhuman resources. (Tough, 1979: 1)

Tough's work suggests that most adults engage in deliberate learning projects as part of their normal 'going on' in the world. For those of who became adult educators in or around 1980, Tough's work had a significant impact, suggesting as it did that our activities might have more in common with a wider pattern of human activities viewed as 'adult learning' than with the various familiar professional and institutional categories of further education, higher education, adult education, training and so on.

We used the Web of Science database of academic articles published since 1981 to trace the trajectory of Tough's influence on academic authors since 1981. There is a significant reduction in the number of 'general' citations of Tough (lifelong learning and educational research) in the post-1990 period. Even in the earlier period, a significant number of these references are primarily concerned with Knowles' (1980) theories of 'self-directed learning', and reflect an incorporation of Tough's work into the broader professional field of adult learning theory. Indeed the title of Tough's 1982 work, with its reference to 'helping people change' suggests that Tough's own concerns were marching in that particular direction too (cf Welton, 1995: 77). Some of this work is based specifically within the psychology of learning. There is a significant ongoing interest in Tough's theories in relation to older learners, perhaps because this is a group which has, in general, more time for 'learning projects' but is less likely to be involved in formal, organised adult learning, including workplace learning. However, our broad conclusion is that the major ongoing influence of Tough's work lies in a variety of specialised forms of professional education and development, including medicine, management and other forms of continuing professional development, rather than in the field of lifelong learning research.

It is interesting to see how Courtney (1992: 111) avoids confronting the full implications of Tough's work by positing a distinction between adult education as a 'personal' reality and adult education as a 'social' reality. In (correctly) claiming the latter as the field of participation studies, he ignores the obvious point that adult participation in self-directed learning project is itself a social phenomenon. Collins sees the incorporation of Tough's work into specialised professional fields as, in a way, implicit in his own (Tough's) desire to present adult learning itself as a discrete professional field:

> *The major achievement of Tough's work is to present the far from novel insight ... that adults learn on their own initiative, construing self-directed learning in such a way as to provide an arena for professional intervention by adult education practitioners ... (Tough's publications) do not endeavour to explore the meanings, in context, and cognitive structures that adults bring to their learning endeavours.* (Collins, 1991: 23)

Our task, then, is to place Tough's major empirical finding alongside two points established earlier in the paper:

- Most adults regularly engage in independent learning projects (self-directed learning theory)
- Only a minority of adults engage in formal education and training (participation studies)
- What adults learn within formal settings is deeply problematic ('new' sociology of education).

Changing the angle of attack

This paper, then, takes the view that, in so far as there is a problem about participation in adult learning, it is located in the apparent limited ability of formal providers of adult education and training to engage with the interests and enthusiasms of the adult population across a range of 'difference'. This proposition also appears to accord more readily with other cultural features of British life, including the popularity of television documentaries and pub quizzes, support by adults for children learning at school, and the high level of informal learning that goes on within the organisations of civil society (Elsdon et al, 1995). Indeed, there is some practice which suggests that such an engagement is quite possible (Stuart and Thomson, 1995; Ainley, 1994). Taken together, both theoretical analysis and empirical data would indicate that Tough's work, despite the limitations of his own analytical procedures, suggests a different starting-point for a consideration of the role of learning in the lives of social actors, from the starting-point adopted by most participation studies. That starting-point would be broadly the missed opportunity indicated (above) by Collins: 'the meanings, in context, and cognitive structures that adults bring to their learning endeavours'. (Collins, 1991: 23)

Some emerging empirical evidence also begins to cast doubt on the professional assumption about the reluctance of adults to participate in learning. For example, the DfEE (La Valle and Finch, 1999) have compared the findings of the National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) which covered a three-year period during 1994-97 with a follow-up survey covering an 18-month period in 1997-99. This second survey is called Pathways in Adult Learning (PAL). This showed that 28% of those classified as 'non-learners' in NALS reported learning in PAL. While only 56% reported learning in both periods, 81% reported learning in one or both periods. Payne's (1999) survey of holders of Individual Learning Accounts in the Dorset Tec area also produced anecdotal evidence of this phenomenon, despite his use of the familiar categories of regular, occasional and non-learners:

> *... these figures cast some doubt on the validity of claims (my own included) that there is a 'learning divide' between those who regularly participate and those who do not. What the figures here suggest is a pattern where people move in and out of learning just as they might move in and out of other activities. Thus any study of participation becomes a snap-shot rather than a panoramic view based on people's careers and life histories. One man of 35-44, for example, ticked 'regularly' in question 1 but wrote in: 'But over last 7 years. Not before.' So he must have been at least 28 years old before starting on his adult learning.* (Payne, 1999: 11)

Other important evidence comes from:

- The success of the UNISON Return to Learn scheme with members in mainly 'unskilled' jobs and with few formal qualifications (Kennedy, 1995)
- The success of a number of Union Learning Fund projects which have extended participation to groups who have been traditionally defined as 'non-participants (Shaw, 1999)
- Employee Development Schemes across a range of industries (Forrester et al, 1995) which have placed an emphasis on a wide variety of learning and employee choice in learning
- Adult and Community Learning Fund projects which have attempted to extend the range of local authority adult education in terms of modes of delivery, place and time of learning, and course content

What many of these projects and schemes have in common is that they begin to explore some of the constraints and limitations of formal learning, include workplace training, and to engage with a more basic enthusiasm for learning among people. They begin to suggests the circumstances under which non-participants or occasional participants may become regular participants and thereby enhance both their individual life-chances and the liveliness of the communities in which they live. The *terms* of their possible social inclusion through learning (rather than the bald fact of their participation or non-participation) is seen as being of paramount importance. This paper questions, then, whether a definition of participation which only considers existing formal learning, and further adopts a 'snapshot' (synchronic) approach to participation at particular points in the life course is able to capture the complexity of adult learning patterns. We would suggests that

- The overall issue is the extent to which formal adult learning (which we understand to be the field of interest of participation studies) does or does not engage with the larger-scale and longer-term contexts which shape the learning aspirations of social actors
- A diachronic approach to learning in the longer context of the life history suggests that individual social actors move freely between bureaucratic categories such as 'regular', 'occasional' and 'non' participation during the life course (Payne, 1999), and also between formal and informal learning.
- Tough's original theoretical work on 'adult learning projects', based on a significant quantity of empirical evidence, suggests that most adults engage in deliberate learning projects as part of their normal 'going on' in the world. It has failed to influence decisively the approach to participation studies, partly because of his own preoccupations with adult education as a professionalised activity.
- More sophisticated models are needed to describe participation in adult learning, models which might enlighten the working methods of formal providers of adult learning. Such models would acknowledge the context in which social actors live their lives and both the possibilities and constraints which they experience in their daily lives.

Work in progress

There are discontinuities between informal and formal learning. If these discontinuities are to be overcome, then it will be necessary to consider not just those sorts of learning projects which adults engage in consciously, but also the overlapping area of informal learning captured by the term 'situated' learning. This implies the type of learning which arises incidental to a person's active involvement in a job, a voluntary organisation or an activity such as playing a sport or coping with an illness. Let us, for a moment, choose to consider learning projects and informal (situated) learning as the 'public' world of learning – public in the sense that it is a major part of the day-to-day lives of social actors – while the professional field of formal learning becomes the 'private' world of learning – private in the sense of being a relatively unusual activity which most adults take part in on a sporadic basis. It follows that only an engagement with informal learning in all its variety will allow formal education and training to re-establish its links with the world of adult enthusiasms, interests and desires. To refer back to our historical starting-points again, we need to take fresh account of the insistence of educators such as Young and Keddie who pointed out that participation in any kind of learning is not just a question of 'access', but of 'access to what?' and 'under whose terms?'. At the same time, we must apply those understanding specifically to adult learning and to the new context of a new century, with all its new (and not-so-new) challenges and problems.

Finally, the paper should be seen as 'work in progress'. We are strongly aware that neither the data nor strong theoretical models exist to answer all the questions raised in this paper, but we hope to have, at very least, produced a paper which is suggestive of further lines of enquiries. We welcome the various new government initiatives outlined at the beginning of this paper. But we think it is important to recognise that the world into which the concept of lifelong learning is being inserted is more complex and messy than policy statements might imply. Our academic task is, hopefully, to understand a little better some of that mess and complexity.

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The network society and lifelong learning - the work of Manuel Castells and theories of adult education

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Introduction

This SCUTREA conference on Researching Inclusion has 'researching the theory' of the education of adults as one of its three themes. This paper makes a case for the centrality of sociology to this theoretical enterprise, and in particular it argues that the work of the Spanish Sociologist, Manuel Castells, can be applied fruitfully to assist our understanding of the education of adults.

Castells has produced a monumental three volume study under the generic title of 'The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture'. The study consists of three volumes: 'The Rise of the Network Society' (1996), 'The Power of Identity' (1997) and, 'End of Millennium' (1998). The entire study forms a massive survey of the information age - providing many underpinning case studies and detailed empirical data. This paper draws on this work – in particular Volume One.

Whilst it is argued that Castells' work provides a clear theoretical underpinning for the education of adults, paradoxically, Castells has little to say specifically about adult education or lifelong learning. One aim of the paper, therefore, is to draw out from the work the implications for adult learning in a way that Castells does not. Castells' work is indeed vulnerable to the criticism that he underplays the role of education and lifelong learning. It may therefore be fruitful to explore adult learning issues using the basis formed by Castells impressive work.

After providing a brief summary of Castells' work the paper will outline four key concepts developed by Castells which are, arguably, crucial to theorising the education of adults. We cannot, in this context, do justice to the complexity and detail of his study but hopefully remain faithful to his main intentions in summarising some key concepts. The paper concludes by examining some of the concrete policy and practice implications for adult educators - which are implicit rather than explicit in the original work of Castells

Castells himself is best known as an urban sociologist. His work is strongly influenced by historical materialism and can be identified as being within this tradition, although interestingly in Volume Two of the study he also places a great emphasis on the concept of identity. Castells' study is profoundly materialist and is in many ways a debate with post-modernism.

The conceptual framework

A reading of the Information Age suggests that there are four main concepts which are potentially central to our understanding of the education of adults: change, informationalism, globalisation, change and identity. Each of these concepts are deployed in a particular way by Castells. We shall now examine each of these concepts in turn before finally exploring the potential for the application of these concepts to the education of adults.

Change

Castells' key argument is that in recent years, 'several events of historical significance have transformed the social landscape of human life' (1996, p1). These events, Castells argues, include the technological revolution, economic globalisation, the demise of the Soviet State, the restructuring of capitalism, changes in global power and relations, the globalisation of crime, and the emergence of a new communications system. Social changes relating to these include a transformation of the position of women, the growth of environmentalism, a crisis of legitimacy of the political system, the growth of religious fundamentalism, and shifts in the meaning and sources of identity (1996, p2).

We are, Castells argues:

living through one of those rare intervals in human history: an interval characterized by the transformation of our 'material culture' by the works of a new technological paradigm organized around information technologies (1996, p29).

The current revolution is characterised not simply by the production of knowledge, he argues, but by:

the application of such knowledge and information to knowledge generation and information processing/communication devices, in a cumulative feedback loop between innovation and the uses of innovation. (1996, p32).

This raises the following questions: what are the key elements of this change ? What is the material foundation for current pace and nature of change ?

First, Castells argues, 'these are technologies which act on information, not just information to act on technology, as was the case in previous technological revolutions' (1996, p61).

Second, he notes, 'the pervasiveness of effects of new technologies' (1996, p61).

Third, it follows from these developments that there is a new networking logic, that the development and exchange of information is dependent on networks of enterprises and organisations.

Fourth, he argues that the new information age is based on flexibility. This is where change is central:

what is distinctive to the configuration of the new technological paradigm is its ability to reconfigure, a decisive feature in a society characterised by constant change and organisational flexibility (1996, p62)

Fifth, and finally, there is 'a convergence of specific technologies into a highly integrated system' (1996, p92).

According to Castells the new economy which emerges from these changes is both informational and global; 'the core activities of production, consumption, and circulation, as well as their components are organised on a global scale' (1996, p66).

Change then is central to the new information age. Change, as Marshall Berman (1983) has also argued, becomes a central feature of modern life. It should be expected and not come as a surprise. Having established the centrality of change let us go on to examine two more specific aspects of this - informationalism and globalisation.

Informationalism

Castells argues that informationalism is the key feature of the contemporary era, an argument which has been developed in the British context by Charles Leadbeater (1999). Fundamental to the work of Castells is his argument around the significance of the information technology (IT) revolution. This is not, he argues, any form of technological determinism, but rather 'because of its pervasiveness throughout the whole realm of human activity' (1996, p5). Castells argues that the significance of the spread of IT is that a new society is emerging from this process which is both capitalist and informational - a new,

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restructured form of capitalism which has information at its heart.

For Castells informationalism is a mode of development of the capitalist mode of production. It has, however, a specific meaning and significance:

In the new informational mode of development the source of productivity lies in the technology of knowledge generation, information processing, and symbolic communication' (1996, p17).

Informationalism refers to:

the attribute of a specific form of social organisation in which information generation, processing, and transmission become the fundamental sources of productivity and power (1996, p21n).

One might argue that Castells is vulnerable to criticism that he is arguing for a form of technological determinism. However he argues that he avoids a crude determinism by proposing that:

societies are organised around human processes structured by historically determined relationships of production, experience and power (1996, p14).

In terms of the agency/structure debate it would seem therefore that we can place Castells in what we might call the Giddens structuration camp (1991).

Castells goes on to argue that the informationalism concept can only be understood as a global phenomena.

Globalisation

For Castells one feature of change and of informationalism is its global nature. Again this is seen as new and giving a peculiarity to the current stage of social change; *'a global economy is a historically new reality, distinct from a world economy'* (1996, p92)

Thus a global economy is something different from simply a world economy. The focus is on the ability, '*to work as a unit in real time on a planetary scale*' (1996, p92). However, it is clear that this varies locally and is partially dependent on the particular role and nature of the nation state (1996, p102).

This global impact has implications for the nature of enterprise and for our understanding of the organisation:

the diversity of cultural contexts where the informational economy emerges and evolves does not preclude the existence of a common matrix of organisational forms ..... (1996, p151).

There are six key features of the new organisations which are:

1) they have shifted 'from mass production to flexible production, or from Fordism to post-Fordism

2) 'the crisis of the large corporation, and the resilience of small and medium firms as agents of innovation and sources of job creation' (1996, p155)

3) we have seen the emergence of 'new methods of management' (1996, p157), these include 'just in time' methods, total quality management, the focus on team work and the development flat hierarchies, for example. Central to this aspect of globalisation is the changing relationship between management and workers.

4) one feature of these changes is the emergence of a ' multidirectional network model enacted by small and medium businesses' (1996, p160) - this and other forms of networking are central to the information age.

5) 'the licensing-subcontracting model of production under the umbrella corporation' (1996, p160) has also emerged as a feature of contemporary organisation

6) and finally, it follows that corporate strategic alliances are also central to the new organisational structure (1996, p162).

Changes in organisational structure are summarised by Castells as follows:

Many of the debates and experiments concerning the transformation of large scale organisations, be they private or public, business-oriented or mission-oriented, are attempts to combine flexibility and co-ordination capabilities, to ensure both innovation and continuity in a fast changing environment. (1996, p166)

The impact of informationalism varies according to the specific features of each national economy. Thus, for example, in the U.K. we have witnessed the growth and development of what Castells calls the 'Service Economy Model'. Thus, the

differentiation between different service activities become the key element to analyse the social structure .... it is also characterised by the expansion of the managerial category that includes a considerable number of middle managers' (1996, p229)

Central to Castells' argument, and as we will see later, vital in terms of lifelong learning, there is also a new labour process (1996, p240). Elements of the labour process have been enhanced as routine tasks become automated, as 'information technologies call for greater freedom for better-informed workers to deliver the full promise of its productivity potential' (1996, p242). The two key features for the labour process become, 'the ability to generate flexible strategic decision-making; and the capacity to achieve organizational integration between all elements of the production process'(1996, p243).

Castells provides case studies which demonstrate that in high performance enterprises employees spend a high proportion of time in training and that they are characterised by a high degree of worker autonomy (1996, pp245-6).

These new organisational structures contribute to social divisions and social exclusion :

increasingly educational qualifications, either general or specialised, required in the reskilled positions of the occupational structure further segregate the labour force on the basis of education, itself a highly segregated system ...... (1996, p251)

Thus:

the traditional form of work, based on full-time employment, clear-cut occupational assignments, and a career pattern over the lifecycle is being slowly but surely eroded away (1996, p268).

In this context more low skill jobs are created and we have also seen the development of structural unemployment in Western Europe. For political and organisational reasons, according to Castells, the information society is becoming a dual, divided society.

Identity

For Castells identity is a key explanatory framework. He argues that:

the first historical steps of informational societies seem to characterise them by the pre-eminence of identity as their organising principle (1996, 22).

Again Castells gives a helpful definition of identity as:

> *the process by which a social actor recognises itself and constructs meaning primarily on the basis of a given cultural attribute or set of attributes, to the exclusion of a broader reference to other social structures* (1996, 22)

In a shared frame of reference with Giddens (1999) Castells argues that the emphasis on identity is in opposition to the trend towards globalisation:

> *the widespread surge of powerful expressions of collective identity that challenge globalization and cosmopolitanism on behalf of cultural singularity and people's control over their lives and environments* (1997, p2).

This reaction, according to Castells, can be pro-active, where people attempt to shape their own lives, as with environmentalism and feminism, or re-active, in the sense of nationalism and religious fundamentalism. Castells identifies three types of identity:

First, legitimizing identity which rationalises the domination of the current authority base.

Second, resistance identity, which is formed by those negatively identified by current forms of authority.

Third, project identity, which aims to transform social structures, through social and political action based on reflection.

The state itself is caught in the conflict between globalisation and identity:

> *caught between these opposing trends, the nation-state is called into question, drawing into its crisis the very notion of democracy* (1997, p2)

Applying the Castells framework

The remaining task of this paper is an attempt to apply the Castells framework to the education of adults and lifelong learning. We shall examine the four concepts which we have identified as couplets - first examining change and informationalism and then moving on to examine globalisation and identity.

Change, informationalism and adult education

Whilst from a lifelong learning perspective we can argue that Castells has failed to emphasise the centrality of lifelong learning to his own argument, it is nonetheless fruitful to apply his concepts to the adult education environment.

The pace and nature of change, which Castells has theorised, is central to our understanding of adult education and lifelong learning. Take the example of the trade-based apprenticeship preparing the young, Western male for perhaps thirty or forty years of continuous employment, or the son expecting to take over his father's job. Neither of these transitions from childhood to adulthood is viable in a period of rapid industrial and social change identified by Castells. The individual in the information age has to learn and change alongside these developments and develop 'transferable skills' on which a 'portfolio career' can be developed. Thus change in the economic, social, political and cultural spheres provide both the context of and the rationale for lifelong learning.

The recognition of pace of change in recent times has been a major dynamic behind the official recognition of the importance of lifelong learning in the U.K. and elsewhere and leads to a need for workers to constantly update their learning (DfEE, 1998).

Informationalism is at the core of these changes. As Leadbetter (1999) has identified many people are now 'living on thin air', working with information and producing information based products in order to make a living. If information is so crucial to modern economies then lifelong learning become vital to reproducing an 'informational' workforce.

Castells draws on the work of Ikujior Nonaka (1991) in drawing the important distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge pointing out that not all learning is formal and qualification oriented. Much of lifelong learning will be informal and will occur in the work context. This is a similar conception to Eraut's distinction between 'C' or codified knowledge and 'P', or personal knowledge (1999, p3).

As social and technological change places the knowledge worker in a position of becoming a continuously reflecting practitioner - learning from the new, changing and diverse situations which face them in their everyday practice, and working in increasingly flexible workplaces - so our practice as adult educators must change to reflect these realities.

Lifelong learning then must itself be responsive and support learners in keeping abreast of the rapid pace of change and development. This can only happen with a real engagement both with cutting edge research and with the workplace and communities as sites of learning. In the modern organisations analysed by Castells the pace of change is so rapid that often social theory and research will 'lag behind'. The learner therefore needs to engage with what is actually happening at work and in the community. Thus perhaps the role of the adult educator is to support, contextualise and make sense of work and community as a learning environment. This is closer to Friere's (1972) conception of the adductive process than the traditional teacher/student model. Recent developments in work-based learning and in adult education in community action settings, reflect adult educators rising to the challenges of change and informationalism.(Ward, 1999, Forrester, 1999)

Identity, globalisation and adult education

At the core of the analysis produced by Castells is the tension between globalisation and identity. To summarise this issue as simply as possible, as globalisation develops, people search for identities which help them make sense of their world and their particularity. Castells argues that these identities can be pro-active (feminism, environmentalism, for example), or reactive, (nationalism, religious fundamentalism, for example). As we have seen, Castells identifies three differing types of identity. The one which shall concern us here is what Castells identifies as project identity, where people build identities which aim to actively transform aspects of the social structure.

It is proposed here that the globalisation/identity couplet is helpful in enabling us to understand the changes facing us as adult educators. We are all working with populations facing the consequences of globalisation - the closure of the coal mines, the development of call centres, the proliferation on television stations and so on. Such changes will be experienced differently in different localities. How people will react to these changes will depend on the specificity of their position and their locality. New developments will bring excitement and challenge for some and bemusement and unfamiliarity for others.

If Castells' analysis is at all correct our task could potentially be to work with people to develop project identities - that is to develop a position on change which enables them to engage positively as change agents when faced with the consequences of globalisation. Many readers here will be reminded of the work of Paulo Freire who wrote of :

A deepened consciousness of their situation (which) leads men to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation (1972, p58).

Positive engagement with change could also discourage resistance identities which may lead to a growth of racism, nationalism, and fundamentalism. Thus the globalisation/ identity couplet may well assist in helping adult educators position themselves both theoretically and politically.

Let us take the example of the popularity of local history in adult education settings. This suggests that there is a constituency of adult learners who are seeking to situate their local identities in contrast to the impact of globalisation. Theoretically in such situations it would be possible to develop, in Castells' terms, either a resistance identity or a more progressive, project identity. Adult educators therefore potentially have a role to play in working towards active, project identities.

A related issue arising from Castells' focus on conceptions of identity is the increasing diversity of the social formation in modern, Western societies. In the contemporary environment people build identities in relation to being women, gay and lesbian people, people with disabilities and so on. There is a major challenge for lifelong learning in taking these diverse identities seriously. Can the 'widening participation' agenda overcome the inequalities in the education system, which Castells identifies and provides empirical evidence for, so that the needs and demands of these diverse groups are clearly addressed? In recent years great steps forward have been made in utilising identity politics to ensure, for example, that higher education institutions are more open to these diverse 'identity' groups. If we are to take the identity agenda seriously as adult educators then we need to address inequalities arising from diverse agendas.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to summarise some of the key concepts emerging from the work of Castells. The paper has sought to apply these concepts to the current state of adult education in order to suggest a theoretical framework with some direct application to policy and practice.

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An inclusive MBA? Researching curriculum design and delivery.

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This paper discusses issues of inclusion in the context of MBA degrees, focusing on access and progression for non-traditional students. It begins with an analysis of the genesis and growth of MBA programmes and highlights unresolved tensions between elitism, concepts of academic rigour and discourses about access and inclusion. Using an Action Research approach, the authors present a case study to illustrate the development of a range of management programmes, designed to provide opportunities for progression. The developments are contextualised within the post-Dearing agenda and conclusions drawn about the value of such developments and about institutional resistance to change.

The development of the MBA

The Master of Business Administration degree is perceived as one of the most elite qualifications offered by British universities. It vies with Oxford and Cambridge degrees in terms of status. Yet the MBA has changed considerably since it was first introduced in American graduate Business Schools a century ago. The MBA's origins in the UK date back almost forty years to the development of the UK's first two Business Schools, following the publication of the Robbins (1963) and Franks (1963) reports. At first the MBA in the UK had resonances of the elitism of American graduate schools. It was offered by a small number of exclusive graduate Business Schools to limited numbers of candidates. Most programmes were full-time. Throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s there was a sustained growth of university provision and a rapid expansion of postgraduate programmes in general and MBA programmes in particular. By 2000 there were 116 UK providers of MBA programmes and around 16,500 enrolled students, including 4000 enrolled in British universities at overseas locations (AMBA, 2000). The vast majority of those students are part-time.

Although the MBA has, to a large extent, retained much of its original prestige, the proliferation of provision has led to some concerns about comparability and variation in standards. It was singled out for particular mention by the Dearing Committee (NCIHE, 1997 Main Report, 10.59):

> *At the postgraduate level, we have heard some concerns about the comparability and consistency of standards of postgraduate programmes across the higher education sector. The most extreme example is the Masters in Business Administration (MBA). Here, the awarding institution has become the prime recognition point for students and employers, rather than the course and its content.*

The MBA differs from many Masters degrees insofar as it provides a broadening of perspective to encompass a wider range of knowledge and skills rather than a narrowing of focus to concentrate on specialist areas (Carswell, 1999). The diversity of programmes is generally acknowledged (Burgoyne and Reynolds, 1997). Perhaps because of an emphasis in MBA programmes on strategic management, finance and marketing, graduates have always been able to command high salaries in the market place (MacErlean, 1993). This is less pronounced than it was twenty years ago, but the MBA is still perceived as a significant boost to careers in both the public and private sectors (Golzen, 1998).

Concerns about the MBA have focused not only on issues of standards and quality, arising from responsiveness to market forces, but also about their relevance for management development. During the 1980s it was this concern with relevance which led to three reports (Mangham and Silver, 1986; Constable and McCormick, 1987; Handy, 1987). These documented the relative weakness of the UK's provision for management development, both in the workplace and in the universities and argued that, unless radical changes were made, the UK's economic position would continue to decline.

In response to these reports the Management Charter Initiative (MCI) was established. This employer-led body drew up a framework of management competences which formed the framework for NVQs in management at levels 3, 4 and 5 (MCI, 1990,1997a). NVQs were promoted by the new Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and there was a substantial commitment to these new management qualifications by colleges of further and higher education and private training providers. Take up by employers was patchy and there was little evidence of interest in the universities where, with few exceptions, vocational qualifications had low prestige (MCI 1997b).

During the last decade competence has emerged as a major issue in both management education and in human resource management (HRM). Competency-based approaches have begun to have a considerable impact not only in the way in which educational programmes are designed and delivered, but also on the management of human resources in many organisations. Boyatzis (1982) is usually credited with generating the debate about competencies in HRM. His definition of competency as 'the underlying characteristic of a person' focuses on desirable inputs rather than required outputs. This definition is reflected in the work of other writers (Thornton and Byham, 1982; Woodruffe, 1982; Cockerill, 1989; Dulewicz, 1989; Glaze, 1989; Greatrex and Phillips, 1989; Jacobs, 1989). These competencies focus on characteristics like 'efficiency orientation', 'proactivity' and 'use of socialised power' (Boyatzis, 1982). In contrast NVQs and the MCI management standards are outcome-led and form the basis of national standards of management competence, assessed, ideally, in the workplace.

Concepts of competence and competency differ significantly from traditional educational perspectives, which focus largely on the development of cognitive skills (Middlehurst, 1995). Although many attempts have been made to draw up qualifications frameworks which address the issue of equivalence between NVQs and academic qualifications (QAA, 1998), universities have generally been slow to accept equivalence.

The tension between competency and academic standards, between the independence of universities and the requirements of employers has led, in management education in particular, to a divide between professional and academic qualifications. This is reflected in a sectoral split of provision between universities and colleges of further and higher education.

Both further and higher education institutions have been subject to unprecedented change in the last decade as a result of shifting expectations of their stakeholders.

Reductions in funding per student during a period of rapid expansion have required considerable efficiency gains in both sectors. The shift from an essentially elitist to a mass system of education has heightened concerns about standards and quality. New technology has created both opportunities and threats as universities and colleges compete globally rather than locally. Changing beliefs about where the locus of learning should be have encouraged more flexible programme designs and modes of attendance.

Debates about lifelong learning, continuing professional development and key skills have encouraged a re-examination of methods of learning and teaching. The role of the teacher in both further and higher education has been questioned, as has the relationship between research, scholarship and teaching.

Research questions

At the centre of many of these debates is an underlying tension between quality and inclusion. Is it inevitable, that as more people move into higher education, standards will deteriorate? Does more mean worse? As the unit of resource diminishes does quality fall with it? Does the introduction of new methods of learning signal erosion of academic rigour? Nowhere are these questions more salient than in the MBA. The growth of MBA programmes in the new universities had, to some extent, widened participation, yet ladders of opportunity for non-graduates with professional management qualifications were limited. The particular questions, which we wish to address, are:

- Can an MBA be inclusive?
- In what ways can access be improved whilst still maintaining academic rigour?
- Can an MBA satisfy both academic and professional requirements?

Research design and methods

Both authors are active management educators. During the 1990s we were employed in the management department of a college of further and higher education. Our concerns were twofold: - to maintain quality standards in a regime of diminishing resources and to improve access for a wider range of students to higher level qualifications. Our research design was based on Action Research models (Elliott, 1991; Zuber-Skerritt, 1992; McNiff, 1993). Our research was value driven and focused on solving problems and improving practice. Through innovations in curriculum development, collaborative experimentation and reflective practice we set out to achieve our objectives. What follows is a case study based on our experiences. These were recorded at the time in a range of documents, including minutes, memos, correspondence, submissions, quality assurance reports and reflective statements. We have tried to include sufficient autobiographical detail and triangulation of method through evidence from external sources to provide an account which is trustworthy and credible.

Case study

The MBA programme described in this paper had its genesis in the early 1990s, when the authors formulated a strategy for developing a Business School's student base by furthering links with universities. The Business School described in this case is located in a large college of further and higher education. It was, at the time, a University College of a well-regarded provincial redbrick university. A particular emphasis of the strategy was to provide additional progression for students who traditionally did not undertake Masters programmes, but who showed great potential. Substantial funds were made available for this initiative and its operational implementation.

Several universities were approached with a view to exploring progression pathways onto MBA programmes. The prospective partners included two provincial redbrick universities, one large international Business School and one new university. All were given full details of the current management provision and curriculum details of the programmes considered appropriate for linking into the proposed MBA programme. Great care was taken to emphasise academic rigour and equivalence.

The proposed route offered to the prospective partners was based on an established Postgraduate Diploma in management validated by the Institute of Management (IM). It was delivered by a Business School, which was recognised as an IM Centre of Excellence and where participants had consistently won the Institute's annual national prize for postgraduate programmes. This programme had been designed on best practice models of first year MBA programmes. It was of a strategic nature and was mapped to the MCI Senior Management standards. Even without MBA linkages, the Postgraduate Diploma was a valuable stand- alone qualification. Most participants had progressed onto the 'Postgrad' from Certificate and Diploma programmes at the Business School; some had progressed from supervisory programmes; a few were direct entrants in senior management positions and with extensive work experience.

The International Business School recognised the excellence of the curriculum design and outcomes and agreed that individual cases for exemption would be considered for parts of their MBA programme. However, there could be no general agreement. It was made quite clear that the chance of progression for our students through a special relationship was low. They were concerned with their prestige and felt that their status was so high that they could charge premium rates and remain exclusive. They did not see the future as being one of forging partnerships with other institutions.

A local redbrick university was concerned with equivalence. Although this was demonstrable beyond their own standards, they were not comfortable giving full exemptions and only part exemptions were offered. Fees were also an issue, but these could be negotiated. The authors made several visits but progress was slow. The other redbrick university was situated several hours journey away and proved to be more amenable to full exemptions. There was a greater understanding of the equivalence of professional qualifications with a competence focus. However, we felt that this university was interested more in income generation than in academic rigour. We made two visits and progress was fast.

The new university was also amenable to full exemptions and had a good understanding of professional programmes and equivalence. It was interested in a joint venture approach and insisted on several of its staff being involved in teaching on the programme. It required full documentation of equivalence. This demonstrated a commitment to quality and academic rigour, which encouraged us to develop this relationship. After a number of visits by staff from each institution to the other, a partnership was formed. This resulted in a theoretical progression from supervisory level through Certificate, Diploma and Postgraduate Diploma to MBA, after five years of part-time study. The reality was that most students entered at Diploma level and the pathway took three years. However, several students have graduated with an MBA having started at supervisory level. This achievement is much valued by the students themselves, who never thought that they were MBA material and would not have been accepted for enrolment on more conventional programmes.

The post-Dearing agenda

In the case outlined above the emphasis has been on providing avenues of progression to students whose first experience of higher education is as an adult.

Typically, students embarking on management programmes of this nature are in their early thirties. Often they have no formal qualifications, yet have demonstrated workplace skills, which have resulted perhaps in promotion into a management role and in a quest for management qualifications. Because students enrolling on professional management programmes are adults with substantial life and work experiences, our approach to learning and teaching has tended to reflect this. Teaching methods follow more closely Knowles' (1978) concept of andragogy than the didactic models of pedagogy employed in many traditional university programmes. The role of the teacher has shifted from subject expert to facilitator of learning. Action learning approaches have encouraged students to take responsibility for their own learning and to complete projects, which are organisationally relevant and academically rigorous. Explicit use has been made of the experiential learning cycle (Lewin, 1949; Kolb, 1984) and both the modular structure and the assessment regime stress the importance of skills and competencies. On all programmes, participants produce portfolios, containing evidence of their continuing professional development.

The approaches, methods, curriculum and outcomes of the programme are all consistent with what may be called the post-Dearing agenda in higher education, although the development of MBAs in colleges of further and higher education is not. Dearing places learning and teaching centre stage (NCIHE, 1997: Recommendation 8):

> *We recommend that, with immediate effect, all institutions of higher education give high priority to developing and implementing learning and teaching strategies, which focus on the promotion of student learning.*

Explicit within Dearing's vision of a learning society are recommendations about lifelong learning, staff development, and skills and competence (NCIHE, 1997, Summary Report).
There are high expectations that universities will respond to the priorities of their stakeholders by addressing these issues.

Conclusions

The case study confirms that the MBA can be inclusive. It is possible for students to progress from professional programmes and attain an MBA. Yet major barriers exist to developments such as that described. The authors' experiences whilst searching for a route to ensure progression emphasised the distance between the vision for an inclusive education system, based on equality of opportunities and the espoused theories of many higher education institutions. These institutions continue to support an elite system, which has its foundations not in meritocracy, but in a misplaced belief that professional qualifications embracing management skills are not commensurate with more conventional academic qualifications.

There is a distinction to be made between elitism and excellence. Many institutions with a reputation for excellence guard this reputation by careful screening of the student body. In this way excellence is determined as much by the exclusive nature of student cohorts as it is by the programme structure, curriculum and staff. For example, the Association of MBAs, which accredits MBA providers, places a great emphasis on conventional academic qualifications and denies the equivalence of professional and vocational management qualifications. This is in direct opposition to the value placed upon skills, emphasised by Constable and McCormick (1987) and Handy (1987) in their seminal reports and substantiated by subsequent research (Hendry, Pettigrew and Sparrow, 1988). Excellence is dependent on sound processes, which add value to produce desired outcomes.

Within universities, elitism and snobbery thrive. During negotiations about an undergraduate degree accreditation at a redbrick university, our academic contact talked disparagingly about 'polyversities'. (The adviser has since taken a chair at one such 'polyversity'.) In new universities there is often a feeling of superiority over colleges of further and higher education. Certainly, in our case, college students were treated poorly compared with the university's own students. Parity of esteem was not manifest. Information was not always provided or was provided late. Assignments were set without consultation and comments sent to external examiners without prior discussion. Notwithstanding this disparity of treatment, it was one of the college students from the first cohort who attained the best MBA profile and was nominated for the programme prize.

It is unlikely that the model we developed will survive the post-Dearing changes in the distribution of HE programmes between universities and colleges. The partnership we established will not continue beyond the end of 2000. There is, however, scope for other models and other partnerships, if champions can be found. Franchising may no longer be possible, yet agreements about equivalence and progression could still flourish.

In other fields, universities have formed partnerships with professional bodies to provide joint academic and professional awards. Masters degrees in HRM, leading to graduate membership of the Institute of Personnel and Development are one such example. There seems little reason why, if the elitism attached to MBAs can be overcome, the same cannot be done in general management. There are some indications that this is happening, albeit slowly. A small number of new universities have integrated Institute of Management qualifications and university qualifications in new award structures, demonstrating that an MBA can satisfy both academic and professional requirements. As the Institute of Management is currently seeking chartered status, such developments may prove timely.

Recent Government initiatives such as the Higher Education Reach Out to Business in the Community (HEROBIC), which places a great emphasis on the development of management skills, may also ameliorate current attitudes, especially as there are substantial grants for participants. Judgements about excellence based on ill-founded notions of reputation rather than evidence serve only to maintain the status quo and are serious impediments to an education system which is truly inclusive. This is particularly true, as we have seen, in management education. There are many individuals who, given appropriate guidance, can benefit from MBA programmes. If universities are to achieve Dearing's vision they must find ways in which to cater for those individuals' needs.

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Including the excluding image: researching and teaching cultural images of adult educators.

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Introduction

This paper discusses the value of including an examination of cultural images of teachers within the teacher-education curriculum. There are two dimensions to 'inclusion' in this paper. Firstly, we consider this to be an issue of 'inclusion' because of the reducing spaces for imaginative work in teacher education in an increasingly outcomes and standards driven environment (see the Teacher Training Agency and Further Education National Training Organisation standards). We are, in effect, asserting the case for including activities in teacher education which draw on the affective and imaginative domains, that may stimulate a reappraisal of assumptions embedded within the 'standards' themselves and which have less predictable and measurable outcomes than competency-based approaches. Secondly, we are concerned with the inclusion and exclusion of certain kinds of images about teachers and education in popular cultural texts such as popular music, literature, film and television.

We draw on our work both as teachers and as researchers. Our argument as teachers is that using cultural-studies based approaches helps to raise students' awareness of taken-for-granted assumptions about good teaching. It provokes challenges to beliefs students may hold about education, but which they may perhaps never have fully articulated, because they are constituted by 'myths', deeply embedded in our popular cultures. Maxine Greene explains:

> *Informed confrontations with literary texts, may (though the process of defamiliarisation, perhaps) enable students to perceive their own illusions and stereotypes, even as they expose them to the multiple ways in which the world means to those inhabiting it.* (Greene, 1988)

We are interested in the effect of exploring with teachers the contested and evolving images of their profession as embodied in a range of popular cultural texts. As researchers, we report in this paper on work in progress which combines analyses of cultural texts featuring education and educators, with questionnaires and interviews exploring teachers' perceptions. The research examines school, FE, adult and community educators' beliefs about 'the good teacher' and compares this with the characteristics and behaviours of fictional teachers they have encountered. It also investigates a range of cultural texts featuring education and explores their reactions and responses to the portrayal of education in those products. We aim thereby to identify the extent to which popular culture reflects and reinforces commonly held views about education and helps to construct teacher-identities. We also aim to explore the kinds of engagement with these views which takes place once an individual participates in the profession and gains actual teaching experience.

Representing the profession

There is a substantial literature, particularly in the US, on representations of teachers and schooling (Joseph and Burnaford 1994; Weber and Mitchell 1995; Farber, Provenzo and Holm 1994; Fischer and Kiefer, 1994; Auchmuty 1992). Such writings offer diverse perspectives on the significance of popular cultural images of education, such as Farber and Holm's (1994) discussion of the charismatic educator in film, Weber and Mitchell's (1995a) analysis of Barbie as a student-teacher and Cooper's (1993) account of the complex connections between schooling and popular romance. Not surprisingly, given the plethora of images of schools, colleges and education in popular cultural texts, critics are conscious of the contradictory nature of many of these representations. Education is a politically contentious field; there are bitter disputes about best practice; the press represents teachers as anything from saint or hero/ine to trendy incompetent or sad failure. The very act of focusing on these contradictory images can foreground struggles about the meaning and purpose of education.

Some prevalent images particularly concern us as teacher-educators. One of these is the teacher as charismatic loner. Teachers and lecturers are often alone in their classrooms, of course, but a successful education usually depends on the collaborative efforts of a team of people and on a properly functioning institution. In popular culture, however, the teacher is often shown as the saviour, the one good individual *working against* the prevailing ethos of the institution and the uncaring behaviour of fellow teachers (*Please Sir; Birth of a Nation; Matilda; To Sir with Love; Blackboard Jungle; Dead Poet's Society* and so on). Farber and Holm, discussing a tranche of 1980s movies note how they focus on male protagonists and their heroic emotional struggle to bond with students. By contrast:

These pictures leave everything outside the frame of the relationships we exult in virtually untouched, including the larger institutional realities that provide the backdrop for what we see. (1994, p169).

This emphasis on the personal charisma and integrity of the teacher leads to representations that value only the immediate and interpersonal aspects of teaching. Good teaching only takes place through direct student contact, rather than through hours of unseen labour and preparation. For many teachers, especially perhaps new teachers, the amount of work needed outside the classroom exceeds that expended in face-to-face work. In so much popular culture, however, the perspective is not that of the teacher, but of the rest of the population, who see only the public face of the teacher's work. This, combined with the cult of personality, reinforces one set of beliefs about good teaching – that the good teacher has an infinite amount of time to spend on individual students. Indeed, as Weber and Mitchell (1995) indicate in their analysis of *Kindergarten Cop*, the idea that teaching is a skilled profession needing training and practice is constantly negated by representations in which new or even unqualified teachers walk in and immediately outperform experienced staff.

How far such representations help construct teacher-identities is the issue we hope our research will explore. Personal reflection on the supervision of student-teachers' work experience leads us to believe that these issues are important. Students are frequently 'uncritically critical' of the beleaguered lecturers they encounter on teaching practice. However carefully we prepare them, they expect far more individual attention from placement institution staff, than is ever likely to be realistic. Their critical assessment of the effectiveness of experienced teachers' work often misses two points. Firstly, it does not recognise that the purpose of teaching is student learning, rather than the demonstration of the teacher's knowledge and expertise. They underestimate excellent facilitative lessons, grounded in extensive preparation and analysis of students' needs. Secondly, they are astonished by the notion that a teacher who needs to spend extensive time giving extra individual tuition might be a poor teacher - one who is not capable of planning learning effectively for groups of students, or one who has emotional needs that can only be satisfied by situations in which students have to be grateful for extra support. Indeed, it could be argued that the popular image of the heroic teacher, perpetuated by the 'No-one Forgets a Good Teacher' campaign, could attract individuals who are more interested in their own image that in student learning. There is a contradiction between the notion that teaching is a projection of the individual personality, and the aim of many experienced teachers, who like other skilled artists, make it look easy - so easy students think they did it all by themselves.

A politic image

'Education, education, education' was the catchphrase that prompted the 'No-one Forgets a Good Teacher' campaign, and it is within this context and the political discourse surrounding education which preceded it, that our research evolved.

There are two human inventions which may be considered more difficult than any others, the art of government and the art of education; and people still contend as to their very meaning. (Kant, 1960, p12)

Meanings and how they are constructed, interpreted and manipulated are central to our study on a personal, professional and political level. Increasingly, the art of education is being subsumed by the art of government; initially through Thatcherism, and, more recently, in the political cant, the discourse of New Labour. Tony Blair's political positioning aims at inclusivity, a 'third way', which he calls 'one nation politics' (CBI speech, 1998) and which is identifiable through the vagueness and ubiquity of the inclusive 'we/ us':

We intend to make Britain the best-educated and skilled nation in the western world... This is an aim we can achieve, if we make it a central national purpose to do it... To be competitive, we have to aim high . . . This is a challenge for all of us. Taking responsibility for our country's performance ...It's really up to us: the greater the responsibility, the bigger the reward. (CBI, 1998)

This is the rhetoric which has given impetus to the concept of an inclusive, 'lifelong' learning and which has characterised reform of the post-16 curriculum. It is not, however, a discourse which integrates critical analysis with social transformation in a Freirean libertarian model of education but rather one which embraces utilitarianism. This means that *we* are identified with society, and that lifelong learning seeks to provide vocational skills rather than develop individuals' affective or imaginative potential. Even the 1999 white paper, *Learning to Succeed*, indicates that the new Learning and Skills Council, responsible for four million students in further and adult education, should firstly, meet the learning needs of business, and only secondly and thirdly, those of individuals and communities. The politicisation of education is apparent in ITT and inspection standards, but it is also evident in the prescription of the curriculum and even (in literacy and numeracy hours) in designated delivery. 'No-one Forgets a Good Teacher' suggested that teaching was a vocation, a career in which one could be noticed, and yet the opportunities for teachers to express their individuality are circumscribed by competencies and accountability. Entering the profession, student teachers encounter an ideological hegemony where their expectations come into conflict with the realities of teacher training and of classrooms. It is within this critical interaction and the wider social and cultural images which affect intending teachers, that ambiguity is created about what being an effective teacher really means.

From the outset of our research, it was clear that we would need to interrogate cultural images of teachers while at the same time juxtaposing them with teachers' life experiences and perspectives. Intending teachers are not just consumers of cultural images of teachers; they have been pupils and students and have constructed an identity for themselves as teachers. They have personal and professional biographies, and these are the stories that interest us. Since our research analyses motivation and explores how cultural knowledge impinges upon models of teaching, we needed initially to identify the language which student teachers might use to represent their cultural lives and professional identities. Those with whom we work are adults; many of them have made career changes in order to enter teaching. Often, our research suggests, a positive attitude towards young people and adults and a sense of social and moral purpose have influenced decisions to teach. So, although job security and working conditions were factors, social responsibility and a desire to empower others were more significant than either of these or of teachers' status and the effect of advertising campaigns.

Given this perspective, it is perhaps not surprising to see that our provisional findings suggest that the cultural images dominating the minds of intending teachers are those of charismatic individuals who have changed the lives of those with whom they work. LouAnne Johnson in the film *Dangerous Minds* and John Keating in *Dead Poets' Society* exemplify the image of teachers which most impressed although, amongst music graduates, Mr. Holland in *Mr. Holland's Opus* made a strong showing. In fact subject identification is unusual. English teachers figure prominently in the most admired category (both Johnson and Keating are English teachers), although none of the respondents were themselves intending to teach English. Other well regarded English teachers include Susan Kennedy from the Australian soap, *Neighbours*, another unusual image since she is not only a principal but can often be seen working at home, and Mr. Farthing in *Kes*. Less popular, but still admired, were, Ian George, the superhead from the television series *Hope and Glory*, Mark Thackeray from the film *To Sir with Love*, and the teacher who will take you home, Miss Honey, from the novel and film *Matilda*.

Some images produce an ambivalent response. John Kimble in *Kindergarten Cop* was both admired and condemned by respondents, as was Jean Brodie from *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. The cultural messages from both are ambiguous. John Kimble has no training but yet is able to win the children over. Jean Brodie has her own highly political agenda. Overwhelmingly, however, Mr Bronson from *Grange Hill* was cited as the worse teacher with Mr. Sugden from *Kes* and Miss Trunchbull, the draconian headmistress from *Matilda*, coming up behind. *Grange Hill* staff were subject to criticism despite the fact that, for many, Grange Hill School constitutes the most recognisable and familiar image of an educational establishment. What is also noticeable is that, with the exception of Ian George in *Hope and Glory* and Susan Kennedy in *Neighbours*, headteachers, most infamously *The Demon Headmaster*, occur in the worse teacher section often while their colleagues at the chalkface, such as Miss Honey, elicit admiration. Prospective teachers signify an allegiance within an institutional paradigm in which headteachers obstruct and undermine staff who, fortunately, are able to collude with students and create an alternative and stimulating learning environment. Sometimes these teachers, like LouAnne Johnson in *Dangerous Minds*, need to reconstruct themselves to become acceptable to their 'socially challenged' students and to differentiate themselves from the establishment. In LouAnne's case, this is by wearing black leather, incorporating street vocabulary, teaching karate and song lyrics and offering an expensive excursion as reward for students' endeavour. Inevitably and ironically, of course, this admired educational landscape is peopled by teachers, for whom, with the exception of Susan Kennedy, school or college is everything, people whose personal and professional lives have merged and who, consequently, have no extraneous demands upon their mental, physical and emotional beings. The rest of us, like Homer Simpson, have got a life, such as it is.

Homer

There are many illustrations of schools and school teaching in popular culture and examination of these is relevant to teachers of adults. After all, prospective adult educators have their perceptions of teaching shaped by real and fictional experiences of school. Their decision to become teachers in the post-compulsory sector can be seen in relation to images of school as well as images of adult education and might even be understood in part as a reaction against images of mainstream education. Both our teaching and our research includes scrutiny of school-based texts. For the purpose of this conference, however, we would like firstly to discuss a recent animation portraying adult education in order to illustrate how such texts can offer useful stimulus material for student-adult educators.

There are far fewer representations of the teacher of adults than of the school-teacher. One recent and unlikely candidate for the profession was however, Homer Simpson. A group of in-service FE teachers at summer school in 1999 deconstructed Homer's foray into the world of the adult education teacher. They identified the following stereotypes, contradictions and ironies.

Adult educator status

Homer, in defiance of his illustrious name, is sensual man personified, preoccupied with donuts, 'Duff' beer and cable TV. His decision to seek employment as a tutor is prompted by the (long overdue) realisation that his friends and family think he is 'slow'. Once appointed he is immensely proud. Not only does he boast to all his acquaintance, he goes to drive-in CrustyBurger bars so that he can tell the intercom that he is a teacher before driving off without making a purchase. He cuts red lights, shouting, 'I'm a teacher - let me through' and wears the dowdy tweed uniform of his profession with pride. It would seem then, that the cartoon indicates that this is prestigious work, that tutors have status in society.

This is undercut by the scene in which Homer is appointed and by subsequent representations of the centre in which he works. These scenes offer a different set of perspectives on the adult educator. Anyone can become a tutor. No training or qualifications are sought. The administrator is only concerned with filling classes and getting someone who is still breathing to stand in front of them. Homer has only to mention that he is happily married to find himself in charge of a class on the subject. We see his fellow tutors - recognisable characters from the series, drunks, incompetents, down-and-outs. Adult education is presented therefore as an entirely amateur business, staffed by the dregs of society.

The curriculum

The range of subjects taught is a parody of menu-driven, recreational education. Groups of prospective students surge from class to class until they find the most amusing option. The idea that adult education offers easy, unchallenging subjects reaches its zenith in the 'Orange Eating' class. Moreover, a central tenet of much adult education teaching, the value of learning from life-experience, is savaged in the treatment of Homer's marriage class. Struggling (not surprisingly, given his lack of knowledge and training) to think of anything to do with his students, Homer resorts to telling stories about his own married life with Marge. The students adore this, and beg for more and more details. The whole idea of story-telling and of building on experience is represented as an excuse for gossip and prurient curiosity. Just as the tutors are shown to be amateurs, the curriculum is shown to be trivial and knowledge-free, an excuse to gossip and extend social interaction.

The Simpsons' episode offered the students the opportunity to reflect on several aspects of adult education and its marginality. It stimulated their thinking about the value of their own training for a profession that does not, currently, require trained staff. Status is conferred when standards are set for entry to professions. The standards set for school-teachers, the emerging standards for FE teachers and the standards set for HE lecturers by the ILT do not, however, offer much scope for negotiating, creating or developing the purpose of education. There is a price to pay for losing one's amateur status.

The Homer episode also raised questions about the non-vocational curriculum. The US animation certainly does not represent UK adult education, particularly since the 1992 act. But it does summarise the attitudes towards non-vocational education that may well have contributed to the act. The curriculum in *The Simpsons* is absurd and indefensible, but the place of much non-vocational education is constantly attacked. Chris Woodhead's recent criticism of media studies is a good example. He argues that it does not lead to employment, but does not even feel the need to justify the assumption that the purpose of education is to prepare for employment. The ridicule heaped on self-development and recreational education in Homer polarises the issues around non-vocational education, encouraging students to engage with them. Likewise experiential learning. The animation requires students to examine why such approaches are often criticised, the justice of those criticisms and the reasons they themselves endorse narrative and life-history work, consciousness-raising approaches and using teacher and student experiences.

Conclusion

As our research progresses, we aim to investigate further how popular cultural images have conditioned ideas that prospective teachers hold of what constitutes good teaching. Our intention is to analyse images of teachers within a contemporary framework and to explore the way in which contrasting images impact upon intending teachers, affecting what they construe to be effective teaching and influencing the expectations they have of themselves and colleagues within the profession. We also seek to interrogate the dialectic between current political discourse and the images which are most admired, and to challenge through our research, and as adult educators, models of teaching that appear to be neither inclusive nor to incorporate values which reinforce the realities of classrooms in the twenty-first century.

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Re-visioning the boundaries of learning theory in the assessment of prior experiential learning (APEL).

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Introduction

Much APEL literature is advocatory, descriptive and/or prescriptive. There is little literature explaining and theorising the practice and even less problematising existing theorisations. Understandings of learning and learning theory (beyond experiential learning) remain somewhat limited even as fresh approaches have developed elsewhere. The result is that there may be inconsistencies between pedagogic intentions and practices and APEL may be hybrid in implicitly drawing from a range of learning theories.

It is to a mapping of learning theory that this paper is addressed. An exploration of such a diverse field cannot claim to be exhaustive, but it is hoped that being able to locate and translate between different learning theories will provide a stronger frame for the development of APEL (Edwards 1998). The exploration is used to re-vision APEL practice and the implications of grounding APEL within situated learning theory are considered in some detail.

Learning implies change. At their most general and simplistic, theories of learning can be seen as explanations of this change – of how people learn. The field of learning theory draws from the human sciences generally – most particularly from psychology (behavioural and cognitive) and more recently from social theory, anthropology and linguistics. Billett (1998: 24) depicts three historical 'waves' of developments within the field of learning theory:

> *Having cast off the deterministic nature of behaviourism and accepted the importance of cognitive structures and processes, cognitive theorists are now seeking to understand the relationships between internal processes of the mind, and social and cultural sources.*

These waves are used to guide the writing of this paper. Another component is introduced into the discussion, the question of constructivism.

'The deterministic nature of behaviourism'

Behaviourism dominated the first half of the twentieth century. Based on experiments and research into animals, behaviourists see learning as the conditioning of observable human behaviour through the association of given stimuli with particular responses. Successful learning is therefore gauged in terms of changes in behaviour. The focus is on the external environment and the ways in which it shapes behaviour (an 'outside-in' view of learning).

The view translates into a clearly defined deductive pedagogy in which the teacher is viewed as the traditional pedagogue. S/he controls stimuli and responses through the following types of activities:

- the use of rational task analysis to establish hierarchies of teaching/learning tasks;
- breaking down material into instructional steps and teaching incrementally;
- teaching based on factual and procedural rules, definitions, examples to emulate, and so on;
- learning tasks that model, establish and reinforce the relevant association in the learner;
- rote learning, drilling, memorisation, trial and error learning.

This approach lends itself to system-wide, standardised types of curricula based on prescribed objectives and performance/assessment criteria. Assessment is ongoing and endemic. Low error rates are the norm because of the requirement to repeat until tests are passed. Both grading and pass/fail ratings are compatible with this style of teaching and learning but 'correctness' is non-negotiable.

Behaviourism is underpinned by an empiricist view of knowledge and a positivist theory of society. Atkins (1993) refers to behaviourism as a 'collateral' view of knowledge, one in which it is completely detached from the human mind, human relationships and society. It is like a commodity that can be carved into digestible chunks and possessed. Behaviourism is a deterministic and adaptive view of learning and human potential. The fact that one is acted upon, and that adaptation is without intention, and the fact that the internal workings of the mind remain a 'black box', suggest that behaviourism may embrace and enable the development of only limited forms of learning. It is for these reasons that an interest in the cognitive dimensions of learning developed.

'The importance of cognitive structures and processes'

The 1960s saw the emergence of other views about the way humans learn – this 'turn' was linked to the 'cognitive revolution' in psychology and is embedded in the symbol-processing view of mind. Behaviourism overlooks the processes by which people learn. In the symbol-processing perspective the attention shifts to 'what happens between stimulus and response' (Atkins 1993: 257). The individual mental component of learning is emphasised.

The individual learner gains environmental data via the senses (sensory input). This data is processed and organised (thinking). Thereafter, the learner can act on the world (the output of thinking - activity). The process is therefore unidirectional and linear. The tools for learning are individuals' existing cognitive structures or 'schematas'. As new sensory input is gained, existing structures/schemata undergo modification. The key to successful learning therefore lies in the quality of the processing that occurs between the short-term and long-term memory.

Symbol-processing is based on a view that there are certain universal features of human cognition from which generalisations can be made about human thinking. As Phillips (1995: 5) puts it, the assumption is that learners come into the world with their '"cognitive data banks" already pre-stocked with empirical knowledge, or with pre-embedded epistemological criteria or methodological rules'. The process is reliant upon an assumed correspondence between the external world and symbolic structures in the brain. The question of how these structures acquire meaning remains unanswered.

Didactic/transmission-orientated teaching is implied along with the following types of pedagogic activity:

- abstract instruction (given that the focus is on universal, mental modes and is therefore acontextual);
- mental models - mind maps, generic cognitive frameworks, 'anchoring concepts', taxonomies, networks, 'expert systems', acontextual rules and fixed procedures;
- common tasks – tasks are seen as 'stable across learners' with only one interpretation and one corresponding 'right' answer;
- sequential teaching on the basis of 'cognitive readiness';
- development of metacognitive strategies (such as 'learning how to learn');
- asocial, individualised approaches – little value attached to group work;

- assumed transfer of learning between contexts and situations - from the classroom the 'real world', from short-term to long-term memory, from one discipline to another.

The above understandings and emphases lend themselves to standardised, general curricula and indeed have been used to construct many such curricula and syllabi. Formative and continuous assessments are required to illuminate learners' habits of mind/schemata and to support them in the incremental improvement of cognitive ability. This view of mind has also led to the large-scale development of summative, normative, objective, decontextualised forms of assessment, such as IQ testing and psychometric testing.

As with behaviourism, much of the theory and practice associated with symbol-processing has its roots in empiricism and positivism. Reality is taken to be an objective entity that the mind comes to mirror. As Rogers (1986: 47) says, 'the teacher and learner are faced with something bigger than both of them, to which they both must adapt themselves – the world of knowledge, which lies outside of themselves'. This world is the formalised, codified, scientific world of academic disciplines and school subjects - to be transferred into learners' heads. Once acquired, knowledge can be possessed as an abstract entity residing in the mind (Sfard 1998).

There are obviously serious limitations of symbol-processing especially in its classic form. Context (beyond environmental input) is seen as irrelevant to learning and there is no consideration of what Bredo (1999) calls the 'privileged descriptions' that are coded into the notion of an 'objective' reality and 'objective' bodies of knowledge and how these relate to distributions of power in society. Although some of the theories emphasise learner agency, they seldom emphasise learner judgement and almost never emphasise critique. Thinking is viewed as a skill, the effectiveness of which is determined by individuals' cognitive structures. This suggests a form of determinism, as one is limited in one's capacity to learn by the extensiveness of one's cognitive structures. The strong focus on rules and operations ignores or disallows the 'messy, ambiguous, and context-sensitive processes of meaning making' (Bruner 1999: 151) that some argue to be central to learning.

'The many faces of constructivism'

Although constructivism also developed as a result of the seeming failure of behaviourism, it can be seen as offering a more radical explanation of learning than symbol-processing. The boundary between symbol-processing and constructivism is however a complex one as there are many varieties of constructivism. Cobb (1999) analyses constructivism in a helpful way. He distinguishes between a psychological variant and an interactionist variant. In this section of the paper the psychological variant is addressed, while the interactionist variant is discussed in the section on situated learning that follows.

Within the psychological variant, learners are seen as actively constructing meanings and understandings of the world through reflection on their experiences and through interpretative and hermeneutic processes involving surface and deep (metacognitive) learning.

A combination of some of the following activities might characterise this form of constructivist teaching and learning:

- teaching starts with issues with which learners are actively engaged, often their experience and previous learning;
- instruction focuses on learners making connections and creating new understandings;
- attention is directed to interpreting and negotiating meanings;

- an inclination towards open-ended enquiry – a dislike of closure;
- a focus on metacognition - that is, the deep structures of meaning-making;
- discovery learning, problem-solving, participatory and self-directed learning as opposed to formal expository teaching;
- cognitive and affective circumstances and needs of learners are taken into account throughout.

There are a range of perspectives on the role of the teacher. In most cases, s/he is seen as having responsibility for facilitating the development of learner agency in the process of meaning-construction.

In constructivist thought, prescribed, externally-defined and controlled curricula are avoided, as these work against both the notion of learning as the open-ended construction of meaning, and, responsiveness to individual learners' circumstances and needs. Standardised assessment is anathema as the function of assessment is to provide learners with information and feedback about the quality of their individual learning. Self-assessment and peer-assessment are welcomed as ways to develop deeper awareness of learning. Grading is discouraged, as there are no 'right' answers only degrees of personally-referenced meaning making.

Much of this variant of constructivism resonates with humanistic philosophy that stresses the agency of the learner; movements towards increased autonomy and competence; development and growth; the active search for meaning; intrinsic motivation. Reality and knowledge remain external phenomena that exert constraints on individuals. Learners remain separated from the environment – acting on it rather than within it. The focus on individual development and the lack of the social and cultural in these theories of learning suggest the need for re-evaluation, something that has taken place with the emergence of situated learning theories.

'Seeking to understand the relationships between internal processes of the mind, and social and cultural sources'

The rise of a situated view of mind (along with social and interactionist constructivism) reflects a disillusionment with 'the individualistic focus of mainstream psychology' (Cobb 1999: 135). In contrast to the previous perspectives, a situated approach focuses explicitly on the varied contexts in which learning processes occur. Human knowledge and interaction are viewed as inseparable from the world - situated. In effect, the boundaries of the cognitive system encapsulate aspects of the environment, society and culture. If symbol-processing is seen as an 'outside-in' approach, in situated learning, the activities of people and environment are seen as parts of a mutually constructed whole. Learning does not originate 'in the head' nor is it a product of individual meaning-making. The learner acts within the environment rather than on it.

Intersubjectivity, the understandings that develop between individuals/sub-communities as a result of interaction, become central. Lave and Wenger's concept of legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice is germane. They argue that peripheral participation (as characterised by apprenticeship-type activities, for example) is an empowering form of learning, if it leads to more central participatory positions and to identity change. But, learning through participation is not simply located in social practices; it is, or can be, part of the generation and transformation of social practices (Lave and Wenger 1991).

However, there are puzzles. In the earlier discussion on symbol-processing, it was noted that there are no explanations as to how symbols acquire meaning. In this view of mind there are no explanations of how social learning actually happens or how participation influences psychological development.

Some general characteristics of teaching and learning emerge:

- abstract instruction is not valued;
- learning activities undertaken in transactional relation to aspects of the immediate context and broader societal setting - the community learns – the actual task is of less significance than the culture of the setting;
- context defines concepts and their meanings;
- transfer of learning across contexts becomes highly problematic;
- problems emerging from learners' activity are resolved through further activity – there are no 'givens';
- tasks are not stable – they are open to multiple interpretations;
- social learning is brought to the fore, so dialogue, collaboration and group learning are important - individual performance and group relationships become inseparable;
- metacognition is important but is conceptualised as knowledge about people and contexts as well as knowledge about strategies.

More radically, Lave and Wenger's work also suggests that, because meaningful learning is unintentional and acquired through participation, it cannot therefore be taught. This has major consequences, the abolition or total re-crafting of formal teaching, for example.

Pre-programmed or prescribed curricula are anathema to this theory of learning. Outcomes cannot be pre-known and fixed nor can learning be chunked into pre-established components. Nor would it be feasible to enter into assessment processes that compare and grade people on the same scale. According to Cobb (1999: 139), it is seen as 'inappropriate to single out qualitative differences in individual thinking apart from their sociocultural situation because differences in students' interpretations of… tasks reflect qualitative differences in the communities in which they participate'.

In this view of mind, knowledge is not something that is possessed (Sfard 1998). It is neither an object, nor abstracted mental structures, nor an individual construction with only personal meaning. It is a participatory construction process. It is people who decide what knowledge is constructed - based on social circumstances and social histories. The view of reality is one of multiple representations made through activity. Reality can be known only through the mind and the culturally shared symbol systems upon which it relies. Thus, in some ways, situated learning can be seen to be part of the 'linguistic turn' experienced elsewhere in the social sciences and humanities, that places increased importance on the language and signs upon which we rely to create meaning.

Social theories of learning result in a focus on social structures, how they constrain and guide human activities and how power is exercised. This suggests a critical dimension to learning, one in which constraints are viewed in relational and social terms rather than in terms of individual cognitive deficiency. As Bruner (1999: 155) argues, 'native endowment may be as much affected by the accessibility of symbolic systems as by the distribution of genes', a view that can be pushed towards more post-structuralist and postmodernist view of learning.

Learning theory and APEL: re-visioning the boundaries

Traditionally, APEL practices have been framed by adult learning theory and by experiential learning. Kolb's experiential learning cycle has been central - a cycle of growth and development that involves learners in an iterative reflective process starting from their experiences, reflecting on them, generalising from them and applying them in new situations (Kolb 1984). In short, experience + reflection = learning.

The above mapping of learning theory would locate such forms of APEL within a psychological constructivist understanding of learning, for example, learners constructing their own individual meanings through reflection on their experiences, the inclination towards exploration and open-endedness, assessment using portfolios, and so on.

Some APEL practices within the above paradigm do however draw on aspects of cognitive theory – the use of taxonomies (Bloom, for example) and mind maps; a concern with the development of metacognitive strategies and assumptions about the unproblematic transfer of learning. Others push towards a situated view of mind with attention to social and cultural aspects of learning. Work with Maoris in New Zealand, for example (Benton 1995).

Over the last decade or so, the development of the NVQ system and national standards have led to the adoption of a different approach to APEL. An individual's learning from experience can still be recognised but only to the extent that it matches pre-specified hierarchies of national standards or learning/performance outcomes. Learners are encouraged to match their prior learning to external criteria with assessment as the focus. Selected individual competencies can thus be mapped, evidenced, assessed, packaged and quickly moved into the public domain through their accreditation.

These approaches embody a more behaviourist view of mind. However, the situation is not so clear cut. The discourses of APEL are hybrid. A situated view of mind is suggested by such things as authentic assessment, the language of transparency, and so on. A commitment to the transfer of learning suggests a symbol-processing view. The pedagogic process (aspirationally at least) is seen in constructivist terms – active learners, teachers as facilitators/mentors and so on.

What is clear is that a situated view of mind does not inform APEL practices. This is paradoxical given that prior learning is situated learning, informal and particular, and deeply connected to context. Therefore any treatment of it would surely benefit from drawing on that view of mind. The question becomes, 'What could this mean?'

- APEL could be seen as a process of legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice (academia for example) - concerned with the movement of learners towards more central participatory positions in the wider system of practice.

- APEL could locate itself in a complex web of power relations and also be reflexive about its own operation as a cultural system/micro-power. With regard to the former, as Mandall and Michelson (1990: 5) suggest, 'allow learners to examine the wider circumstances, issues, and problems that have influenced their lives and to situate their own experience within the social organisation…' With regard to the latter, a focus on how practitioners and learners 'construct realities and meanings that adapt them to the [APEL] system, at what personal cost and with what expected outcomes' (Bruner 1999: 155).

- APEL could place higher value on the relationship between learning and cultural and social processes by:
  - replacing questions such as 'What did you do?' and 'What did you learn?' by 'What did it mean to learn this/that in this/that context?' 'What did the context value and why?' - this would couch meaning-making in social rather than cognitive or psychological terms and open

  avenues to explore learning as a form of cultural exchange;
  - drawing out different ways in which people and groups perform tasks and emphasising social and cultural dimensions through life and social histories, for example.

- APEL could encourage and foster intersubjectivity by:
  - seeing learning in active, participatory and relational terms
  - focusing on metacognition as about people and contexts not strategies

It is also the case that aspects of situated learning raise problems for the very project of APEL, for example, the problematising of the notion of the transfer of learning between contexts. What is clear is that in attempting to re-vision the boundaries of learning in APEL, further areas are opened up for debate and contestation. Hopefully this paper has indicated some of the debates in which those involved in APEL on the whole have participated insufficiently.

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Reducing Exclusion – Introducing Choice: The introduction of distance learning into taught courses

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The paper explores the application of a study to discover perceptions of distance learning. Although the original study was carried out to examine distance learning within taught courses, the application of this work is now used within a totally distance learning course. It is not within the remit of this paper to detail all the research process and so certain areas for examination have been chosen. These are the aims of the study, the ethical considerations and the findings. In addition, one cannot discuss this research without acknowledging the literature that informed it and so there is a discussion concerning the main influences and concepts.

The aim of the research was to find out how the participants felt about completing distance learning packages instead of attending study days. The aim was to increase the choice of method of learning so that distance learning and taught sessions could be combined to suit the needs of the students.

The participants were all qualified, registered nurses with at least six months' post-registration experience in critical or continuing care; in fact, some had had many years of practice. In addition, managers had seconded all the participants to undertake a full time six-month diploma level and specialist nursing practice course with the School of Nursing. During this time, the nurses were expected to complete the academic part of the course and gain competence in their specialist area of practice. In order to do this many nurses had to come off a shift system and alter their lifestyle to suit the rigidity of an academic course. Some of the nurses had difficulties with childcare and reduced levels of pay and the writer felt that this was not acceptable. Other nurses also wished to gain clinical experience in a variety of settings and this often meant negotiating with busy clinical areas and attempting to fit this in around the academic timetable. However, there were also issues related to the students' anxieties about completing academic work and a feeling that they wished to maintain attendance and support and not miss anything. For this reason, there was a belief that a combination of taught and distance methods might resolve some of the issues and reduce exclusion from learning opportunities.

The research was carried out over a six-month period and involved using a qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews were carried out prior to and after completion of distance learning packages. An adaptation of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1968, Strauss and Corbin 1990) was used to analyze the data and a preliminary model was produced to explain the findings. The participants were a convenience sample taken from a group of sixty students who all self-selected. A pilot study was carried out with three course members and the participants in the main study numbered 14. The participants came from different nursing specialities in critical care and continuing care and had no experience of distance learning.

It is a strong belief that ethical considerations are fundamental to any study and that this should provide the framework within which work should be conducted. When deliberating upon the ethical considerations Burgess (1989, p5) proved very useful as was Burns and Grove (1987, p335). Power was clearly an ethical consideration. It could be said that there were two power associations involved, the tutor/learner relationship and the senior nurse/junior nurse relationship. Cohen and Manion (1989, p37) make a pertinent point about "the power of others to impose their definitions of situations upon participants." Additionally, Skodol-Wilson (1989, p84) identified that participants are in susceptible and vulnerable positions where they might feel pressured into taking part. To attempt to deal with this issue, there were explicit statements in the written request to ensure that this was not abused, either to obtain participants, or to influence possible responses. Participants had a clear outline of the purpose of the study and the decision as to whether to participate rested solely with them. Also, they were advised that this would not affect any part of their course or the assessment strategy if they chose not to participate. The subject of informed consent is entrenched in the culture of nursing (Melia 1992, p63). However, assumptions were not made and informed consent was obtained prior to, during and after the process of data collection.

There were also some concerns about the validity of the writer producing the packages, not least of which was the issue of biasing the results in some way. However, there did not seem to be any other alternatives within the constraints of the study, particularly in view of the fact that there were no other published packages aimed at that level and that topic area. In mitigation, the writer had been devising and using distance learning packages, as an additional learning option, for approximately four years. The guidelines used to develop them are based on the excellent advice offered by the Quality Handbook for Open Learning produced by the Manpower Services Commission (1988).

An additional issue related to ensuring that the course members were not disadvantaged in any way. A concern was that because the participants had not chosen this method it might not suit their individual learning style. Therefore, a quality check was written as an integral part of the study. This involved making tutorial time available to discuss the content of the packages. At times, it was difficult because the investigation mainly took place in the clinical area and time was at a premium. Nevertheless, a participant did seek contact later for an additional tutorial, as there had not been the opportunity during the study. This was a clear example of the "right to fair treatment" where Burns and Grove (1987, p344) unequivocally state that the participant should receive what is their due. They also identify that the participant should receive "equal benefits" (Burns & Grove 1987, p345).

Copious amounts of literature informed the study but for the purpose of this paper only those that were felt to have a major influence on the study have been included here and these are Knowles (1978, 1990), Rogers (1983) and Tough (1968, 1979).

From an empirical perspective, reading Knowles (1978, 1990) was an important experience for the writer. This was a time of personal dilemma related to dealing with the role change from nurse to teacher. There was dissatisfaction with the didactic style of teaching that had been assumed and a struggle with the barely formed ideas about how to change it. Knowles (1978) seemed to explain and clarify how to progress both in nurse education and as an individual teacher. Unfortunately, the initial satisfaction has been replaced by some doubts about the validity of the theory and Tennant (1991) supports this.

Rogers (1983) was also instrumental in the formulation of ideas for this study. However, although he justifies his theory with many illustrations from practitioners, there seems to be a singular lack of acknowledgement of other major theorists working in this field. This could raise questions about his use of the term "person-centred" (Rogers 1983, p163) and further makes one skeptical of his philosophy of "valuing". If Rogers (1983, p70) is advocating acknowledgement of others but not practising the theory, this questions the foundation of the argument.

Whilst the writer struggles with Rogers' style, there can be no doubt that his work encouraged a paradigm shift in the world of education. He suggests the notion that facilitation of learning is a more appropriate term than teaching (Rogers 1983, p121). The idea behind this seems to be to encourage learners to be self-directing, self-motivating people. With this, Rogers makes some very challenging and thought provoking statements about the role of the teacher, namely that; "traditional teaching is an almost completely futile, wasteful, over-rated function" (Rogers 1983, p137).

In the writer's opinion, one of the other major difficulties with the work of Rogers and Knowles, is the lack of clear research processes to back up the theories. According to the texts, Tough (1968) substantiates many of the arguments put forward by the humanists (Tennant 1991, pp10-13, Knowles 1990 pp48-51). He is widely quoted as the definitive researcher when working in adult education and this is particularly evident in nurse education texts (Bradshaw 1989, p39, Ogier 1989, p47, Burnard & Chapman 1990, p146).

The results of the studies (Tough 1968, 1979) produced some very interesting findings. Perhaps the most pertinent conclusion related to the help the self-learner obtained. Tough (1979, p98) stated that the learner acquired a great deal of advice and encouragement from a wide variety of people not just from "one or two individuals or objects." Overall, the studies are detailed and easy to read. They are however difficult to analyze because there is not a logical progression from the method to the analysis of the data and the numbers of participants used to reach the conclusions are relatively small. In addition, there are issues with the nature of the sample and the initial presumptions of the researchers particularly in relation to the first study (Brookfield 1981). On the other hand, this is mitigated by the constant reference to previous studies in the series and other researchers in the same field. In addition, the sense of identification with the adult learners studied is strong and the depth of the enquiry is admirable. It is not surprising that these works are so commonly quoted.

After analyzing the literature and reaching conclusions it seems that a primary aspiration of adult learning theory is the element of choice about how a particular goal is selected and the route by which the goal is to be achieved. Moreover the emphasis on developing self initiated and self-directed learning is clearly defined and considered in relation to the way in which a facilitator might help the learner to traverse the bridge between dependence and independence.

Having examined the literature and major influences, the findings of the writers' study will now be presented. Prior to this though, it has to be said that, although the grounded theory methodology was used to analyze the data, there were some concerns about researcher integrity and interpretation. Therefore the technique of analysis was modified and three independent verifiers examined the data in order to test the accuracy of the analysis.

After examining the data from the first and second group of interviews and the data from three independent verifiers, it became clear that the participants had undergone a change in perception. Therefore, what had seemed to be an ill-informed and surprisingly rigid perception altered as a result of the experience of distance learning (see figure 1).

The rigid perception related to feelings of isolation and anxiety about studying via distance learning methods. This was associated with some confusion about what the process would involve. The participants clearly identified a need for social interaction and a rapport with the writer (the teacher).

Because of having the experience of distance learning, and gaining knowledge about it, the participants displayed an altered perception. This altered perception related to choice, convenience, confidence and satisfaction. Moreover, although they seemed clear about the formal support systems, they preferred peer interaction, at least in this case where the programme content itself had not proved difficult to follow. However, the participants appeared to need to know that the formal support systems were available during the process of completing the packages. They seemed to see this as a platform from which to leap into the new experience, and as a mattress upon which to fall should it become necessary.

Interestingly, the positive perceptions identified in the study appeared to mitigate the negative perceptions. For example, the feeling of a need for interaction is replaced by the idea that peer interaction took place. An illustration of the changed perception would perhaps be pertinent at this point. One of the participants asked for a tutorial after the second interview had been completed. She was interested in completing a Masters Degree in Continuing Education. When she contacted the appropriate department, she was informed that it could only be completed using a distance learning method. As this participant had been so adamant that she needed to be taught before taking part in this study, it came as a complete surprise that she was even contemplating using this study mode for an entire course. Consequently, the writer was extremely concerned about the result of this study on the individual. The participant was cautioned against making a hasty decision until she had seen the study material and had an opportunity to find out about the formal support systems. It also felt necessary to identify that her experience of distance learning had been within the protection of a full time taught course and an enthusiastic teacher with a personal stake in the outcome. This made the writer intensely aware of the need to be mindful of the consequences of carrying out small-scale research in close contact with the participants.

There were some issues with the study for instance, there were only 14 participants. Therefore, the conclusions can only be based on the opinions of those fourteen participants. Neither could the writer be sure, as a novice researcher with an obvious interest in the outcome of the study, that the participants were not influenced to respond in the way they perceived they should. Finally, the distance learning packages were produced by the researcher because of a lack of specific, short, specialist, nursing related, professionally produced packages. This could have had an undue influence on the results. However, all practical steps were taken to minimize bias within the constraints of the study.

Two questions become apparent. What has been learned from the study and how does this reduce exclusion? This was a very small study and the findings cannot be generalized. However, because of completing the study there was a raised awareness about students' needs and the lack of opportunities for those who could not alter their lifestyles to fit in with an academic programme. It became apparent that taught courses did not offer choices to those who had to work full time or to those working in other countries without the major funding to study abroad. This excluded many health care professionals who wished to undertake further study.

Therefore, along with the support of many texts and much advice, the writer has now moved on to support students undertaking a fully distance learning course. The course is a Masters of Arts in Health Care Management.

Perhaps the most important application is in relation to the support systems. All the participants of the study identified the importance of these systems and it therefore seemed sensible to set up a formal and structured support system for the distance learning course. It became apparent that flexibility was presumed but not always present for those wishing to complete courses. They required a flexibility of approach but study time had to fit around work and family commitments and so it was not at all flexible for the majority of them. This meant that the support systems had to be flexible to assist them. Teachers had to be available outside hours and outside term times to provide assistance and there is no doubt that technology has assisted with this process. Consequently, negotiation with students and with the organization is crucial to assist the students and to enable the teachers to maintain a reasonable level of support without a huge increase in working hours.

The other application of the study relates to the philosophy of the facilitators. It became apparent that students could be influenced by the beliefs of the facilitator. This is, however, only associated with the choice of method. If the facilitator saw the distance learning method as a poor second to the taught method then students were reluctant to attempt it. On the other hand, if the facilitator saw distance learning as another option within the taught courses that was equally valid then they were more willing to try it out. Therefore, after the study, many more students were encouraged to try out distance learning and a large proportion came to prefer the mix of options.

In relation to the fully distance learning course, this experience is being applied so that a small team of teachers with a positive approach to distance learners now provide telephone, postal and electronic mail support for students on the course.

In conclusion, offering distance learning methods as an additional choice within taught courses is a way of introducing choice in learning and reducing exclusion from what is often a rigid and inflexible academic environment.

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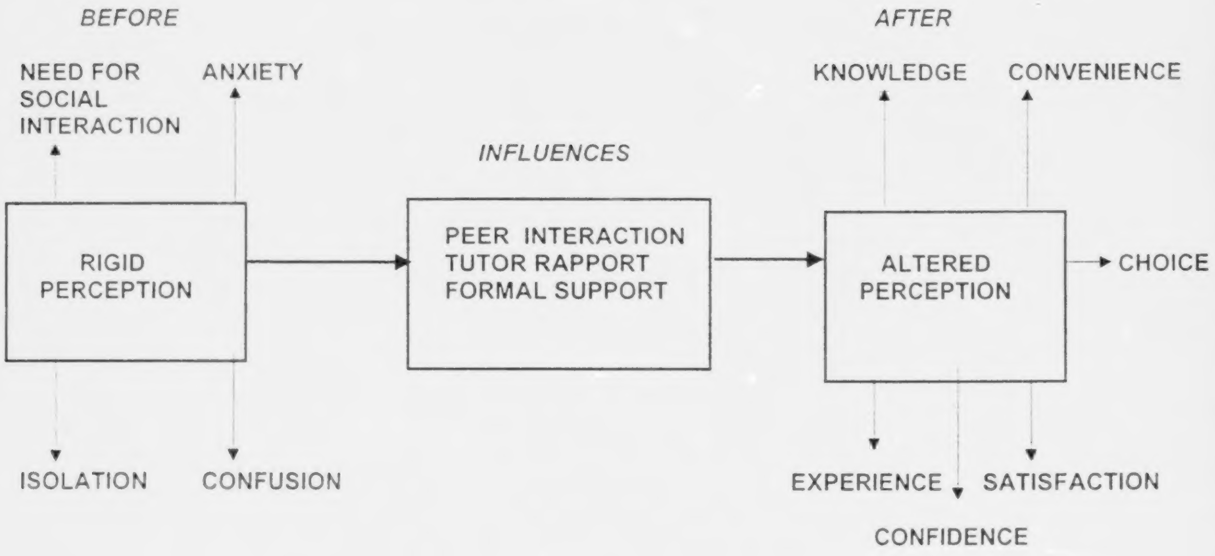
FIGURE 1
PERCEPTIONS OF DISTANCE LEARNING


BEFORE
NEED FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION
ANXIETY
RIGID PERCEPTION
ISOLATION
CONFUSION
INFLUENCES
PEER INTERACTION
TUTOR RAPPORT
FORMAL SUPPORT
AFTER
KNOWLEDGE
CONVENIENCE
ALTERED PERCEPTION
CHOICE
EXPERIENCE
SATISFACTION
CONFIDENCE

Accountability, audit and exclusion in Further and Higher Education

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The audit culture of further and higher education

In the UK as elsewhere, education is increasingly conceived as part of an audit culture (Power, 1997). There are two underlying assumptions. Firstly, with vast amounts of public cash being spent upon education, the services have to be seen to provide value for money. This is presumed to require measures of what educational value is, almost entirely seen as outcomes of the educative process. Secondly, there is a frequently espoused need to improve the quality of education and learning, in order to enhance economic competition and greater social inclusion. Once more, outcome measures are assumed to be necessary. Attention has focussed upon retention rates and qualification achievement, as two measures of the quality of educational provision. In Further Education (FE), key elements are funded only when students stay on their courses for the entire funding period and achieve the aimed-for qualification at the end.

In this audit society, one form of educational progress is reified, almost deified, as being superior to all others, to the extent that it becomes almost the only permissible model. The assumption is that students sign up for a course with clear, predetermined objectives, and that the success of the course can be measured by the extent to which those objectives, including course completion and, normally, qualification achievement, are met. When they are not, the assumption is that either there was inadequate guidance, selection and induction and the student should never have been enrolled on the course; and/or s/he was poorly taught and supported. Failure to complete is taken as an unproblematic measure of inadequacy in course provision.

Recent research, conducted by us, has produced evidence that this largely unquestioned model is deeply flawed, for it is based upon a series of false assumptions. These include:

students' wants, needs and interests remain constant throughout the course;
in cases of drop out, the prime causes lie within the influence, if not the control, of teachers and college procedures;
learning on the course must have been unsatisfactory, if the student dropped out;
the only appropriate time to change educational or career direction is after a course has been completed;
dropping out from a course is different from and more serious than other deviations from an intended career pathway.

The research

Most studies of dropping out are retrospective (Page, 1996; Martinez and Munday, 1998; Kidd and Wardman, 1999). This makes it difficult to assess the extent to which respondents restory their past experiences and, in some cases, ignores similarities between those who drop out and other students who do not. By serendipitous accident, we took a different approach. The research we conducted was not primarily focussed on drop out. Rather, we had been contracted by the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) to carry out a longitudinal investigation into students' experiences of learning in FE. To do this we took a stratified sample of 16 year olds in secondary school, who had stated the intention of progressing to one of three colleges. One was a large FE college, one a large tertiary college (in two different cities in SW England) and one was a sixth form college (in a large urban conurbation in NW England). We followed roughly equal numbers of students on three different 'levels' of course: A level courses or International Baccalaureate; General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) Advanced courses or their equivalent vocational programmes; and those doing General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or lower level vocational courses. Males and females were equally balanced in each group. Only the sixth form college had a significant population of non-white students, and we skewed the sample there to include an over-representation of students from a south Asian ethnic background, including Hindus and Moslems.

We followed a cohort of 50 students for at least three years, interviewing them once and sometimes twice a year. Interviews were semi-structured, tape-recorded and transcribed. When the fieldwork was completed, some students had progressed to higher education (HE), some were continuing their studies in FE, some had finished their courses and progressed to work, family and/or unemployment, and some had dropped out. This paper focusses on the last group.

The Nature of Dropping Out

Of the 50, between five and seven students dropped out. The exact number depends upon the definition of drop out used. Kidd and Wardman (1999) summarise a bewildering range of different percentage figures, drawn from a range of research and official reports. In our case, four students withdrew before completing their programmes. One stayed on the course to the end, but never completed the coursework required for the qualification to be awarded. One completed most of his subject studies, but failed to return to complete the last one and never enrolled on the courses he had planned to do the following year. One completed her course and qualified, but dropped out of HE within six weeks of commencing. Other students dropped out of one or more subjects, but are not included here.

In all cases, our detailed, longitudinal research revealed the complexity of factors involved in dropping out. The details of the individual stories have been presented elsewhere (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 1999, in press). Here, there is space only to make some general observations. These can be expressed in three different ways. At the simplest level, a large majority of our sample, whether they dropped out or not, significantly changed their intentions and objectives during the period of their study. Consequently, what seemed a sensible course of action when original choices were made seemed less so later. This does not explain dropping out, for a majority of those who changed intentions still completed their courses. However, it makes dropping out easier to understand as normal behaviour for some, and thus challenges one of the basic premises upon which current audit procedures appear to be based. Indeed, it reveals something profoundly uneducational in current policy, which implies that students should not be changing their minds about what they wish to study, except when the system deems that to be appropriate. Take Charlotte, for example. She completed her GNVQ Advanced course in business and administration, achieved a merit grade, and went on to her chosen university. However, within six weeks of starting there she had dropped out. Apparently the university had failed her, after the college had succeeded. Except that Charlotte does not see it this way. Once she had dropped out, she said:

> *All through the two years at college I did not want to go to university. ... The only thing that was pushing me to go ... was that my friends were going and I wanted to please my family by going, even though they were not bothered. Teachers also said I had the*

ability to go to university and that influenced me as well. ... I was only going for what I thought were the wrong reasons. ... Leaving the course wasn't a sudden decision. It was something that I had felt for quite a long time, even before I went to university. ... The day after I had left the course I think I felt relief and calm. ... I was just glad it was over.

In a long interview and despite repeated probing, she identified nothing about her university experience that was unsatisfactory. So perhaps the college failed, and the university was the victim! Yet Charlotte's story is still more complicated. A year earlier she had talked enthusiastically of going to university, despite her later denials.

Charlotte's story reveals the significance of a second way of looking at dropping out: cultural capital. Of those in our sample who dropped out, all except one, Daniel, came from predominantly working class backgrounds. Charlotte was the first in her family to stay on after she was 16, and her original ambitions had been to get a job at 18. She chose GNVQ, rather than the more prestigious A-levels, partly for this reason. Whilst in the college, she was socialised into a culture where going to university was the norm. For a considerable time she was enthusiastic about that, and her studies. However, this was paralleled by a deep-seated lack of confidence and anxiety which, with hindsight, almost appears to amount to a feeling that university is not for people like her. What seemed normal to many of her peers, seemed challenging and strange to Charlotte. Once removed from the cultural intensity of the sixth form college, she reverted to her original sense of self (Hodkinson and Bloomer, in press). When we last spoke to her, she was working at a low-skilled temporary job in a local factory, where she had previously done work experience. Like many other working class young women, she now saw raising a family as more important than having a career.

Amanda was another person for whom cultural capital proved significant, together with material deprivation. She left her working class family home before she left school, and was studying whilst struggling to support herself on social security payments. Initially she was enthusiastic about her A-level courses in theatre studies and especially philosophy, but critical of English, where she felt that her opinions did not count. She wanted to progress to drama school in order to become a professional actress or musician. On the theatre studies course she met Sash, and they set up house together. But Sash became ill and Amanda looked after him. They decided to put his career first, and Amanda dropped out of her A-levels, to take a vocational course that she hoped would lead rapidly to paid employment. This proved unsatisfactory, so she dropped out again, taking a series of jobs to earn money.

Her story illustrates the third way of viewing dropping out, as involving complex interactions between experiences in college, experiences in life outside college, and contingency. Despite her lack of economic and cultural capital, Amanda's story might have been different if her English A level and/or later vocational course had been more fulfilling. It could well have been different if Sash had not been ill, or if she had established a relationship with someone else.

Contingency had an influence on Luke's career, when he failed to get good enough grades to enter his chosen Intermediate GNVQ course, and was enrolled for the easier Foundation course instead. At this point, he was planning a four-year FE career:

I thought it would be better if I had more experience as well. Like, if I was to do four years here, then I'd have more knowledge about the course. ... One year of Foundation, one year of Intermediate, and two years for the rest (presumably Advanced GNVQ).

His main purpose in embarking on this four-year marathon was to get a job, probably in an office. However, Luke never completed his Foundation course. He found it 'boring' and 'too easy', and the course rapidly developed a culture of dropping out. When he started there was a class of 20, and when he left, six months later, it was down to eight. Also, tensions between the desire to study and the desire for money were resolved in favour of money.

John's experiences almost mirror Luke's. He completed his first year in FE, passing the majority of the GCSEs that he took. He then embarked upon an electronics course, because he wanted to become a sound engineer. However,

I started off with distinctions and then it went to merits and then to passes and then - we won't go any further. I think the course started with about 15 people on it and now it's down to four or five. I was one of the last to leave, but I found it too hard. I think my problem was that I jumped straight into the Advanced (GNVQ) course. I should have done an Intermediate course first, to give me some knowledge, and then carry on.

But, like so many others, John's experiences of college have to be related to his experiences outside. He had very clear views about his social life:

I've got to admit that I can't do homework. I will not do homework. That's something I've always said ... so I don't do it. I'm always out. When I get home like, say, a weekend, I'll go out - go to the pub or something, have a laugh or I'm out playing football ... I had loads of (homework). I used to rush it in the morning on the bus or just never bother handing it in.

These stories make clear that college experiences are important, and most of them can be read in ways that begin 'if only we had done *x* differently/better ...'. However, they also reveal some of the limits of even the best college actions. It remains hard to see what John's tutors could have done about his refusal to work at home, or Sash's illness. In the cases of Charlotte and Luke, the action by university and college most likely to avoid their eventual dropping out would have been not to allow them on to the courses in the first place – assuming that recruiters had the benefits of 20-20 hindsight.

In fact, as our study progressed, we found predicting the future pathways of our sample surprisingly difficult, despite the fact that we knew them rather well, in some ways better than their teachers. Elsewhere in our data, there are students whose experiences are very similar to those who dropped out, yet who stayed the course to the end. Tamsin's home background was more impoverished than that of Amanda, though she never had a Sash to support. Despite many set backs early in her college career, which sound similar to those of John, she persevered: poor grades were replaced by better ones and she completed her Business and Technical Education Council (BTEC) National course. One of the factors which *helped* her was when most of her friends dropped out. She made new friends who worked rather than socialised in the evenings, and proceeded to work hard herself. Fazarna, like Luke, failed to get into her chosen courses as her GCSE grades were just too low. But, despite her deep disillusionment, she went on to achieve success at the level she had originally wanted, taking a year longer in the process. She was supported through this difficult time by her Asian family and her own determination and cultural capital.

For many, dropping out was probably the best thing to be done at the time. From their perspectives it was a solution, rather than a problem. Furthermore, most identified benefits from their incomplete education. Even John describes his satisfaction with his early electronics work, before the later difficulties. For him, the main problem was not that he only learned a little electronics, but that his self-confidence took an elemental battering. For several of the young people we followed, the act of dropping out was of relatively minor significance compared, say, to Luke's failure to get the GCSE grades he wanted, or Sash's illness. As we have seen, Tamsin never dropped out. But, two years after finishing at college, her ambition to progress to university was receding. Her year out to save money had stretched to two and, rather than saving, she was struggling to make ends meet. Yet, in the current policy climate, her course completion and achievement renders this problem invisible. Only her undoubted success is counted. Charlotte's story raises a similar point. Had she never started at university, things would, at least from a policy perspective, have been fine.

Audit, accountability and inclusion

For the final part of this paper, we go beyond the stories in our data, and raise wider policy issues about lifelong learning and educational inclusion. In order to remain within the length requirements this will be rather generalised, and we hope readers will forgive the inevitable simplifications of a complex issue.

Let us begin with the policy intention to increase the numbers of students from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds involved in education and lifelong learning. Currently, English FE and HE are being pressed to widen access, for example through higher payments for students living in so-called 'deprived' postcode areas, through the push for new 'Foundation' degrees and, at a lower level, through the efforts of the Ufl (originally University for Industry). Many if not all of those working in adult and continuing education would endorse these intentions, if not necessarily the specific policy vehicles and mechanisms being developed. But these moves risk being overwhelmed by the much stronger imperatives towards an audit culture of educational quality in general, and on the use of retention and qualification as measures of that quality in particular.

It is well known, and supported by our study, that members of some disadvantaged groups are more 'at risk' of dropping out than are others. Such groups can be understood as those that lack the capital (be it economic or cultural) to sustain them through a prolonged engagement with formal learning, and to survive periods of difficulty. These are the same groups where participation is lowest and the challenges for educational inclusion are greatest. Less well known are the compounding problems described above. Because many of the factors that influence retention lie outside the control and even influence of college or university providers, retention and qualification achievement are inadequate measures of provision. They are also inadequate indicators of learning. Just because a building is not marked on a map, it does not mean that it does not exist. Similarly, just because a qualification has not been achieved, it does not necessarily follow that no valuable learning has taken place. Amanda gained considerably from her theatre studies and philosophy courses prior to dropping out. In a different way, Charlotte's six weeks at university were a demonstrable learning experience, as she discovered that she did not want to stay.

There is a particular concern from the lifelong learning perspective. The current dominant focus on qualification achievement reinforces a view of education as a ladder to be climbed, with nothing further to be done when the student has reached his or her respective top, what ever that is. Tamsin passed her qualifications, so she is not a policy problem, unless she is 'needed' to bolster increased HE targets. Phil Hodkinson's son has almost finished his PhD, at the age of 26. Presumably, having reached the top of the qualification ladder, his lifelong learning is now complete!

In this context, the performance pressures on FE and HE institutions are to play safe. For courses that are over-subscribed, taking widening participation issues seriously is dumb. Those that do so risk a combination of more work and poorer measured outcomes.

For these sorts of reasons, the currently hegemonic and virtually unchallengeable outcome-based audit culture may be seriously damaging to educational inclusion and lifelong learning. If we are to take social inclusion into lifelong learning seriously, qualifications should be seen, once more, as optional badges for those students who want them, rather than an almost ubiquitous prerequisite of successful provision. More importantly, other ways than outcome measures have to be found to monitor the quality of the learning opportunities provided.

We have been here before. Maybe now is a good time to resurrect Stenhouse's (1975) attack on the earlier aims and objectives movement in school education. He argued that the outcomes of education *should* be partly unpredictable, as students changed and grew as people through their experiences of learning. What was needed, he claimed, were better *principles of procedure,* whereby we could maximise the chances of stimulating and valuable learning taking place.

All this is speculative but, based upon our research, one thing seems clear. Widening participation and outcome-based measures of quality, such as retention rates and qualification achievement, are unhappy policy bedfellows. Preserving standards and measures that serve the interests of a large social and educational elite will not increase inclusion. If we are serious about reducing educational inequality, major changes to the audit culture are urgently needed.

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Voices from the community: the challenge of creating a culturally relevant curriculum and inclusive learning environment.

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Introduction

It will be important for the voice of learners from disadvantaged communities to be heard in the Learning and Skills Councils. They may not always say things that providers want to hear but if responsiveness is to be 'designed in', facilities for feedback from users (and non-users) on the quality and accessibility of programmes have to be provided. NIACE (2000).

Listening and responding to the voices of adult learners in the community is central to the design and course validation process used by Lancaster University's Community Access Programme. Although CAP is committed to, and in agreement with this NIACE recommendation, it is clear from our experience and others (Stuart and Thomson: 1997) that changing the institutional mechanisms and encouraging active participation of adult learners in designing educational provision is an extremely complex process. As with other educational challenges there is inevitably no single, straightforward or standardised solution.

Designing a course is a complex process because it involves a number of voices representing different communities, funding bodies, educational providers and adult learners, each with their own criteria for what constitutes a successful course. The communication challenges faced by CAP community co-ordinators in their role as 'street-level bureaucrats' was discussed by Houghton (1999) in 'Voyages of discovery: deciding a convenient time, place and pace to suit adult learners in the community'. In that paper, the learner community was a mixed group of adults belonging to a self-help disability group, the emphasis was on the role of guidance in identifying individual learner support and study needs as well as progression plans. In this paper the discussion concentrates on the learning experiences of women living in East Lancashire who have participated in CAP's African Caribbean and Asian Curriculum (ACA) project. During the last four years these women have participated in CAP's provision and twelve of them, mainly Muslims of Pakistani origin, have also participated in, between one and three, semi-structured interviews designed to explore past, present and future educational plans and experiences (see Preece and Houghton forthcoming). Here we focus on women who participated in the 'Voices in the community' enterprise foundation credit course. The women were provided with an opportunity to voice their views about educational opportunities and barriers as well as offer feedback to university providers at a national conference, the general public on a local radio station and another group of Muslim women attending Blackburn Further Education College.

What is a community? Who are the voices in the community? What is, or should be, the relationship between different voices in the community? How can educational providers involve adult learners (and those currently not involved in learning) in the process of creating a culturally relevant curriculum and an inclusive learning environment? Does CAP's approach to design offer any general lessons? To try to answer these questions we will identify the range of voices involved in creating community learning opportunities. We will then assess the differential positions of power, influence and respective roles and responsibilities of these voices. Finally we will evaluate the pilot study that gave voice to the community, was responsive to their needs, and explored barriers to inclusion.

Voices in the Community

The voice of a particular group within a community depends on how, and by whom, the group is defined, as well as the symbols used to mark out the characteristics of membership (Smith: 1994). Arguably the more complex the community the greater the number of voices competing within it, control and influence dependent on the power of each speaker.

Most people belong to, and participate in the action of many different communities. Some communities they are assigned to, others they choose. The criteria used to define a community, together with the labels used to describe or name a community group are socially constructed and historically positioned (Williamson: 1998). Smith (1994) for example, refers to Newman's (1979: 197-209) analysis of communities that generated six categories of community, 1) working class, 2) quiescent poor, 3) disadvantaged, 4) whole community, 5) acceptable community and 6) society. In the context of the New Labour government the first three communities are more likely to be encompassed in the umbrella term of social exclusion; whilst the 'acceptable community' in current terminology becomes an inclusive community, and the category of society gains the refining adjectives of global and technological. People are assigned to different communities and groups that are categorised in a number of ways; for instance categories based on personal attributes, employment status, social, cultural or religious practices, nationality or geographical location and size.

Within each community voices may be diverse, yet often for ease and convenience, or sometimes simply ignorance, members are presumed to have the same needs and be represented by one voice, which in the case of socially excluded communities is not always their own. So for instance, the ethnic minority community is seen, by many, as one homogenous group, similarly with the disability community. Although people who 'belong' to these umbrella communities may share things in common, there are likely to be as many differences as there are similarities. Assigning people to communities is undertaken for a variety of reasons; in the context of education the labels are often used for funding and curriculum planning purposes. Although such categorisation can be useful, it is also potentially divisive and restrictive. As Elsdon, et al.(1995) explain in their review of voluntary organisations, which may be regarded as communities:

> *a sense of narrowing or limitation, as well as insecurity, is felt most strongly by those who are permanently or temporarily the victims of conditions or characteristics, which distinguish them from what are, or seem to be, majorities* (Elsdon et al. 1995: 56).

Decisions about education are influenced, or should be, by the voices of different communities – policy makers, funding agencies, educational providers, educators, the community and learners - typically and perhaps inevitably, the model of influence and control tends to be top-down. Funding bodies tend to wield the most power using a myriad of financial levers; competitive bidding, short term, targeted funding, requirements concerning learner entry and exit qualifications and other signs of progression, all ensure the voice of those with the money is heard loud and clear, with other voices modulating their demands to hit all the right notes in order to secure funding.

The education community, if there is one, comprise of a diverse membership with often, though not always, little in common between community organisations, LEA, further and higher education providers. Yet in this age of partnerships there is an increasing emphasis that providers should collaborate to provide value for money and increase the educational provision for existing and potential adult learners in the community. The funding, mission, ethos and culture of each educational provider influences the extent to which adult learners are invited to voice their educational preferences and shape the provision. FE and HE validation systems are often fixed and standardised making it difficult, if not impossible, to adopt an alternative process of consultation about the curriculum or the learning environment.

The learners differ in the extent to which they can access and then influence the type of educational available; as Sargant (1997) confirmed 'the Learning Divide between the learning rich and the learning poor is growing' Key finding 3. If we are to challenge this growing divide and encourage adults who have not participated in education before we need to foster a learning environment that is inclusive where the contribution of all voices are valued. Although there is not space to explore the notion of social capital in any depth in this paper, it is possible that this concept offers the potential for creating a more collaborative context. According to Coleman (1997) social capital makes possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be realised. For Putnam (1995) this involves relationships and behaviours such as networks, norms and mutual trust that enable individuals to act together to achieve common goals. Coleman's (1997) three forms of social capital include trust and obligations, information channels, and finally norms and sanctions, that are said to encourage or constrain individuals to work for the benefit of their community:

> *Social capital is high where people trust each other, and where this trust is exercised by the mutual acceptance of obligations* (Schuller and Field: 1998 :229).

In acknowledging the truth of this statement, it is feasible, as with other forms of capital, that the exchange 'value' of each community's social capital is not consistent. So for example, whilst the women of East Lancashire might be regarded as having high levels of social capital amongst their own community, this is primarily self-contained. If their voice is to be heard by the Learning and Skills Council they must find ways of making connections and being actively involved in networks that extend beyond their local community.

The Community Access Programme – The African Caribbean and Asian Curriculum (ACA Project)

CAP is an action research project based in Lancaster University's Department of Educational Research. The ACA project incorporates course provision and research into the barriers into and perceptions about higher education. The aim of the ACA project is to develop in partnership with community groups culturally and socially relevant courses that equip adult learners with skills relevant for higher education and lifelong learning. All courses are negotiated with the learners or their representatives designed to link into one of five foundation credit framework. These include personal development, study, investigation, enterprise and information technology, (see Preece and Houghton forthcoming for a further discussion). The key elements of this provision are the development of a relevant and negotiated syllabus with a fast track validated process and recruitment of 'role-model' tutors who share or understand the women's cultural, religious and ethnic background, their concerns and aspirations and where possible their language. Culturally relevant study skill courses developed for the women in East Lancashire include 'Women in Islam', Qur'an and Hadith Studies', 'Islamic History', 'Bringing up Muslim children in Britain', 'Teaching children about Islam', 'Comparing Cultures' and a Creative Writing course giving women an opportunity to voice their own experiences.

CAP provision seeks to complement the community courses offered by the local further education colleges and to meet the expressed needs of some women, by providing a culturally relevant curriculum. Other distinctive features of CAP provision pertinent to this community include women only classes delivered at a pace that enables women to fulfil their family responsibilities, held at an appropriate time and place in their own neighbourhood, with a crèche attached and with a minimal fee.

Voices from the Community

We spoke earlier about the controlling influence of external agencies on community activities; this can be restrictive, for example the bureaucracy associated with ESF funding. Alternatively, it can generate opportunities as the request made to CAP to 'develop community animateurs', which fortuitously coincided with an invitation to participate in the Northern Network of Non Award Bearing Continuing Education (NABCE) conference entitled 'Voices from the Community'. The notion of community animateurs is very ambiguous; it would seem to depend on the person, the community in which they are operating and the wider context. Even now we are seeking to establish a common understanding of the activities that might be undertaken by animateurs operating in different communities and geographical locations.

A pilot programme of action was planned to include a course based on an enterprise foundation credit and research involving a cycle of interviews with the students providing them with an opportunity to feed back about the programme. The women invited to participate in this course were in the main Pakistani Muslims, they were joined by, British Muslims and a Moroccan Muslim brought up in France. Each had very different life and educational experiences. The women ranged in age from early twenties to forties, five were married with children, and two were bringing their children up alone. They had all participated in previous CAP courses.

The women all lived in a community that might be labelled as socially excluded. In common with other groups experiencing social exclusion, the problems of this Pakistani community are rooted in, and exacerbated by the lack of employment opportunities in North East Lancashire. Where employed, men often rely on self-employment or jobs with low wages; the average wage for a Pakistani male is 40% of that of his white peers. This leaves them and their families dependent on benefits, a situation experienced by all the students on this course. Although a number of younger women are taking up work, partly in order to meet visa requirements, most women are still not in paid employment with their activities centred on the home and family networks.

Exceptionally the idea for this enterprise did not come from the learners themselves, but from an external source – university conference organisers. In allowing the women the freedom to tackle this project in their own way, it was possible that they might not say what the university practitioners wanted to hear. Nevertheless it was crucial that they had the freedom to give voice to their own views and those of the community they sought to represent. They chose to focus on the barriers faced by Muslim women wishing to participate in education. Skills developed within the course included time management, negotiation, decision making, problem solving and communication. The women had ample opportunity to build on personal knowledge and experiences that they gained through participation in education. They were encouraged to think critically, recording their analysis of the project in an evaluative diary. (See Houghton and Ali: 1999 for further details)

Consultation and communication are key roles for community animateurs; like CAP co-ordinators they are required to act at the interface between university and community. To do this it is important that they acquire, without relinquishing their community's message and values, the viewpoint and language of the 'other' community in order to be accepted (Brown and Duguid: 1996). The women decided to identify the level of community awareness about local educational opportunities, the type of courses and the personal, family and community benefits derived from education. They designed a questionnaire (adopting an approach that would generate data that was acceptable to the external audience of the university) but integrated features to promote discussion about issues that were relevant to their community. The questionnaire began with the Hadith[1] "It is the duty of every Muslim male and female to seek knowledge'.

The questionnaire highlighted the multiplicity of attitudes towards and experiences of participating (or not) in education. The group reflected upon their experience of previous community courses. Fauzia described how these courses had extended her knowledge and understanding of the Qur'án and what it means to be a Muslim. As she explained:

Education has affected my life, I've changed myself and I'm applying it (Islam) to myself, ... my children, ... my husband, to the family members, so everything is just changing.

Through their experience of studying culturally relevant courses the women have developed their confidence and self esteem as Muslim women. In addition they recognised that education was sometimes discouraged for cultural rather than religious reasons, which was contrary to the explanations given by some families. Nasreen attributed this discrepancy to 'fear' which resulted in the community, especially men, viewing education for women with suspicion. As she explained, without education:

The woman has no way of knowing if what she is told is the correct situation. Whereas if she is educated, she will have a better knowledge, ... and she will develop interests and then one thing leads to another. ... I think men in the Asian community, men generally like to feel in a position to be able to control people within the family.

Like women not currently involved in education, the group faced many of the practical problems arising from their childcare responsibilities; as Usma confirmed her involvement was dependent upon a crèche. The importance of childcare is however only part of the equation. As the questionnaire confirmed the timing of courses, the distance of the course from home, the cost and above all an inclusive environment are all vital features that make participation possible.

Although not a specific feature of this course, the voices from this community, as relayed by the students, are clearly in favour of culturally relevant provision, which as we have discussed should include community as well as college based learning opportunities. However, many Muslim women did not feel comfortable in the atmosphere of the college, which was dominated by the free mixing of young male and female students. Outside ESOL classes few mature students of Pakistani origin participate in college based provision. Though the local colleges' introduction of Urdu and Islamic Studies is welcomed, other courses, for example history and science, and vocational courses such as catering appeared to take little consideration of the differing culture of the local community. Fauzia reported a new lunch-time initiative developed by a Muslim tutor for women in which she has become involved as a result of increased confidence gained during the enterprise course.

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[1] Saying of the Prophet.

I have been asked to give some talks on Islam, for the girls [at college]. They chose a topic, last time it was on social duties and obligations according to Islam. ... When I look back to when I started I didn't have the knowledge, I didn't have the experience and then I didn't have the confidence. So many things I've learned since I've been doing these short courses.

Notwithstanding differences in age, education and background the women shared common problems and concerns and provided a high level of mutual support and trust during the project – all features of social capital. The interview on local radio was used to talk about the benefits they had gained from attending courses and provided them with an opportunity to encourage other women to do the same. The presentation at the conference consisted of a role-play that outlined the difficulties facing Muslim women who want to go outside the home to get an education. Its content formed the basis of a culturally relevant guidance leaflet. It explores barriers and offers possible solutions. So for example, a common concern identified by local women was:

Concern: I didn't have a proper education, everyone will be cleverer than me.

The solution offered by the group highlights how greater knowledge and understanding of Islam can support their quest for education.

Solution: This is true for many women, but hadith states that Allah will make it easy for anyone who seeks knowledge.

The impact of presenting at the conference was significant. As Mumtaz explained:

I've never done anything in my life like this, ... it was something of a dream: ... you felt a part of them (the university).

Nasreen contrasted the conference presentation with its 'very formal academic feel' with the participatory event with the other women students where there had been:

an exchange of ideas, it felt we had actually reached and touched a nerve that we understood where they were coming from, and it was appreciated.

Although on reflection Nasreen was still undecided about whether the conference presentation had accomplished anything, she felt strongly that the group:

had the opportunity to put our views forward and have them heard and discussed and to be appreciated in some ways. The only way we can break down barriers of communication between classes of people, religion, gender and communities is to talk and to communicate. If we shut ourselves off and isolate ourselves, leave the western on their side and the eastern leave them to their little community, there will be no progress.

Conclusion

The Voices in the Community experience helped the students to develop confidence in articulating their own needs while maintaining their own distinctive voice. As educationalists one of our goals should be to develop and encourage diverse communities to engage in dialogue with education providers to ensure that the provision is culturally relevant and more responsive to their needs. This, we contend, is important so that in the future we can develop a wider and more inclusive community of learners.

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Practitioner research with a difference: widening participation projects

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Introduction

This paper explores constructions of widening participation developed and used by policy makers, institutional managers, practitioners and researchers in order to tease out the relationships between theory generation and policy and practice in the education of adults. More specifically our concerns include how widening participation has been conceptualised in the recently funded HEFCE and FEFC Widening Participation projects. Our initial investigations of the documentation show that, despite an explicit recognition of the need for diversity in institutional strategies, the project proposals funded by HEFE show a remarkable degree of similarity. This paper explores how this has come about by exploring concepts of social exclusion and discourses of recruitment and retention assumed in the policy documentation. We follow this with an exploration of the implications for how under-represented groups are socially constructed in the mainstreaming of widening participation activities.

We ask how far do these constructions further our understanding of social exclusion and the ways in which participation in higher education is constructed? What assumptions are reproduced about social processes of inclusion and exclusion? What are the implications for the key players in widening participation projects, including policy makers, practitioners and the communities with whom we wish to work?

Policy context

As we begin the 21st century Widening Participation has become a key policy objective for higher education in the UK. For example in 1999-2000, the Higher Education Funding Council for England has been steering institutional activities through both formula and special funding to a cost of £150 million (HEFCE, 1999). The stated aims of these funding measures are to increase the recruitment and retention of students from underrepresented groups by directing support at two main groups: disabled students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In these ways the HEFCE can be seen to be constructing strategies to resolve the substantial problems identified in the Dearing report (Dearing, 1997) of low levels of participation in higher education by some groups, and be providing another facet to the current Labour Government's policy to combat social exclusion.

The context is a call for equity and social justice (Kennedy 1997), reminders of our social responsibilities now that universities contain an increasingly 'diverse' and 'different' student body (Dearing 1997) and calls for a national strategy on teaching and learning to support this diverse student body (Booth 1998). What is interesting and disturbing is how issues of equity and equality of opportunity are conceptualised. Throughout these policy documents and reports, (though less so in the Kennedy Report) we can identify an anxiety about the nature of diversity, how it is to be classified and what is to be done about it.

Diversity, difference and multi-cultural are used as synonyms for Black and ethnic minority students. Alongside this is the assumption that 'non-traditional' students are different from the mainstream whose homogeneity is unproblematised. This thinking is reproduced in The Learning Age (DFEE 1999) and a similar formulation appears in the widening participation literature, with critical implications for our practice. Drawing heavily on Kennedy (1997) and Dearing (1997) it highlights, rather arbitrarily, specific and familiar sub-categories of individuals and groups under-represented in higher education. It is significant to note the absence of any reference to the two reports published the previous year on equal opportunities in higher education. (HEQC 1996, EOC,CVCP, CRE 1997)

HEFC Widening Participation Consultative and Invitation to Bid Documents

In August 1998 the HEFC circulated a consultative paper on widening participation. (HEFC 1998) Addressed only to managers, defined as those interested in planning, finance, recruitment, equal opportunities and access, it proposed a combination of funding approaches to encourage institutions to develop strategic approaches. Advice was taken from EQUALL, the HEFC committee on equal opportunities, access and lifelong learning and invitations to bid for special funds circulated (HEFC 1999).

Both documents emphasise corporate plans and institutional strategies. A deliberate decision is made not to set national targets or define strategies in advance as these will 'vary according to the institution's character and mission and the particular groups they may wish to target' (HEFC 1999). But despite this proviso both documents are remarkably specific in their recommendations. Recruitment (defined as increased participation by under-represented groups) and retention (help for students from under-represented groups) are singled out. In the case of recruitment, the consultative document addresses the question of why institutions are not doing more to recruit appropriately qualified students. It then tells us that the reason may be 'either inadequate information and advice to students or weaknesses in institutional recruitment policies and processes' or inadequate progression routes. The document also reflects a preoccupation with the problem of how to identify and classify specific groups and individuals. Almost a quarter of this last document is devoted to encouraging institutions to develop mechanisms to measure the socio-economic background of learners including a recommendation to adopt the Super Profile geodemograhic classifer in preference to the traditional occupational classification. (HEFC 1998)

The document observes that HE is now a far more inclusive activity and cites the evidence for this that women and mature students as well represented in the mainstream. On the other hand muslim women (also referred to as Bangladeshi) and young african-caribbean men are identified as significantly under-represented. Statistically this may be true. Our contention is that we are seeing here the reproduction of a 'commonsense' approach which both takes for granted the labelling of mainstream and under-represented learners. It leads to an oversimplification of categorisation and does not interrogate the inter-relationship between and within groups. This leaves unproblematised the nature of their exclusion from mainstream provision and marginalises their subsequent experiences as they progress through the institution. It also hinders our understanding of similarities and differences in the ways in which all student (and staff) experience in higher education is mediated through the lens of class, race, disability, gender and sexuality. (Allen 1996, Benn 1998)

The consequences of this framing can be clearly seen in the Invitation to Bid (HEFC 1999) which lists twelve areas of activity likely to receive funding. The majority of these focus on projects which are likely to be located peripherally to the higher education sector such as improving networks, credit frameworks, advice and guidance and outreach activities. There is little advice as to the sort of projects, (apart from staff development) which might influence strategies for transforming the mainstream and enhancing students' learning experiences.

Discourses on Widening Participation

Concepts of social exclusion

Current educational policies, including widening participation in post-compulsory education, are firmly located within attempts by New Labour to address the relationship between unemployment, social cohesion and the labour market. The concept of social cohesion has been criticised for its tendency to treat both the employed and unemployed as undifferentiated and to assume that marginal and insecure groups are excluded from and separate from mainstream society. Levitas (1996) argues that an understanding of poverty is only possible through understanding the ways in which the poor are in a structural relationship to the mainstream.

Language of social exclusion

In this section we trace the (re)emergence of this widening participation discourse and offer an exploratory analysis of how it is publicly articulated in the formal textual discourses of the HEFCE in the policy documents and the summaries of the funded projects for the three regions with which we are involved, Yorkshire and Humberside, London and the South-East region. (HEFC Website)

In other words, we will begin to explore the language of the relatively powerful who control the special funding for this area of policy. In doing this we are interested in what Fairclough (1989) called the manufacture of consent through control of 'common sense' (Gramsci, 1971). The language of social exclusion has a number of meanings (Field, 1999, Preece, 1999, Room, 1995). Variously these have included social and economic disadvantage, inequality and poverty, the statistical under-representation of particular groups in areas of education and achievement, or their exclusion from certain forms of knowledge making and decision making in the polity and wider society. In other words, the concept of social exclusion can encompass both liberal and radical agendas. On the one hand, it may focus on increasing the economic and social position of certain excluded groups by increasing, through educational achievement, their means to earn a living or enjoy the lifestyle of the non excluded within the existing order. On the other hand, a more radical conception might regard these measures as merely ameliorating the worst excesses of a divided system. For example, the measures to increase educational participation may reinforce an identity of disadvantage among those without qualifications and further disempower those who have had to subjugate their own knowledge and understandings as they have acquired formal accreditation within the hegemonic knowledge system (Jansen and Wildermeersch, 1996; Trotman and Pudner, 1998). As a consequence, the interesting question for this workshop is how is social exclusion understood by the different players involved in the policy and practice of widening participation.

Not surprisingly, we have found the summaries to be rather brief, and as practitioners in this field, who were in some cases involved in the writing of the institutional bids, we are aware of the ways in which both we ourselves couched our presentations in HEFCE widening participation-speak, and so have contributed to the construction of particular articulations of the discourse. Nevertheless an initial examination of the ways in which these diverse bids have been translated into summary statements of the aims of the projects may be indicative of the ways in which widening participation is being talked about by policy makers, and some practitioners.

Although the language of the summaries is fairly general and most probably underreports the specific activities that many institutions are involved in, a number were identified. In the main these fell into the two broad areas of either raising higher education awareness, or of providing a specific curriculum or HE learning experience, and some projects mentioned both aims.

A preliminary analysis of the project aims in London (15 projects) and Yorkshire and Humberside (8 projects) and the South East (9 projects) reveals a number of common themes. The most prevalent of these is the reference to partnerships. All the funded projects identify partnerships of one kind or another between higher education institutions, or with further education colleges, local authorities, voluntary groups, accreditation networks, training organisations or utilise other partnerships such as the lifelong learning partnerships. This is not surprising since the invitation to bid highlighted the value of such activities and HEFCE has stated that the funding would be targeted at 'continuing to develop partnerships' (HEFCE, 1999). What is interesting is what the organisations' statements, as summarised by HEFCE, suggest will be the role of partnerships in widening participation. On this, the summaries are relatively silent. Where the partnership is mentioned there is an implicitness that the activity itself fosters widening participation: for example, a number of projects refer to their 'aims to build on work already accomplished by the partnership' (Queen Mary and Westfield et al) to 'further the successful subregional approach pioneered in phase 1' (SELHEPS); or to develop a 'regional strategic framework for widening participation in HE' (Yorkshire and Humberside). In other words, developing the partnership seems to be the strategy by which institutions can 'maximise synergy' (UNL et al), 'exchange good practice' (Kingston et al) or address 'understanding of the two cultures' (Woolwich et al). Similarly, for institutions where such links have not formally developed, the focus is on building 'a set of core partners among the FE colleges' (Imperial College) or on 'defin[ing] a strategy ...that will bring together a Higher Education Institution, a community -based charitable organisation and representatives of the Broadcasting industry' (Ravensbourne et al).

17 (53%) of the projects identified activities to improve information and guidance and often these included providing the guidance in more accessible ways within community settings or through individual contact by setting up mentoring schemes and student shadowing, or involved a more institutional focus by mapping progression pathways and formalising credit frameworks for progression. A further subset of these activities included a focus on Web-based learning and interactive guidance, and 7 projects explicitly mentioned the development of Web-sites.

16 (50%) of projects mentioned the development of summer schools, bridging provision or HE awareness programmes, all activities identified by HEFCE in the invitation to bid as examples of good practice. Within these, those who may be familiar with the language of the access to higher education movement for adults (see Williams, 1997) will be interested to note how the ideas of developing courses in 'generic transferable skills for successful HE study', or key skills, and of recognising prior learning are being reconfigured and applied to a wider age range of learners from Year 10 (15 years old) onwards as well as to those traditional Access students of 21 years and over.

By comparison though with the discourses of access there is some silence in these projects about the qualification routes that the target learners will follow. For example, although ten out of the 32 projects refer to

Open College credit frameworks or to progression from vocational qualifications to higher education (NVQ 3 to 4) or from HND to degree, these references were more likely to occur where there was joint FEFC/HEFC funding.

Other projects explicitly regard the special curriculum provision through summers schools or similar as a top up to the A level qualifying route being followed by these targeted learners. By implication therefore, the projects in the main do not legitimise alternative routes to higher education but rather foster the view that these under-represented groups may need something additional to compensate their learning within the traditional entry route of A levels. It will be interesting to see how these understandings are played out over the next few years as the new curriculum 2000 which is supposed to broaden the 16-19 curriculum is introduced.

A further observation is that the focus on guidance suggests that the 'problem' of widening participation is one of lack of knowledge and confidence and that with appropriate information and support the individual who has been excluded will be encouraged to choose higher education. Such a rational model regards the main barriers to participation as dispositional and institutional. These are arguments for which there is some evidence (see McGivney, 1990; 1993) but other equally plausible accounts that refer to the role of material and cultural capital in people's decision making and in the differential employability of graduates could be explored (see Brown, 1995). Interestingly, only one project identified employability as a focus and the need for action projects around this with ethnic minorities, mature students (23-30 years) and those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. However, given the concern of HEFCE with retention and other performance indicators it is likely that this will become increasingly relevant to many projects once they engage in dialogue with potential learners.

Players in widening participation: insiders as outsiders

The tensions alluded to so far and the different ways of understanding who the learners are for whom participation needs to be widened and how this might be done, echo those of other debates. For example, among the access to higher education movement, the access practitioners have always swayed between the liberal efforts to increase participation and the radical critique of the curricula and education system (Williams, 1997). In a similar way, within the field of equal opportunities the debates about whether to focus on creating equity or equality of opportunity resonate strongly with our concerns as do the suggestion that in order to understand how policies are played out one needs to examine the micro-politics of organisations (Cockburn 1991 Farish 1995).

This has a particular resonance for us as contributors to this workshop. We are certainly more privileged than the learners in our organisations. Yet, although we share similar locations as women project managers, practitioner and researchers in this field 'we' are differently positioned in relation to other differences such as 'race' and sexuality. Questions of identity and how others perceive us impact on how we negotiate our positions in the workplace. As we were involved in the writing of the institutional bids we have contributed to the construction of particular articulations of the discourse. However we are relatively 'other' in the academy, and experience the forms of institutional discrimination which have been all too well documented in HE. (Morley & Walsh 1995, Ozga 1993, Modood 1999)

As reflective practitioners we are aware of the contradictions we face as managers of projects with respect to accountability (explicit organisational versus moral and social responsibility) and in relation to the use of different evaluation methodologies. Nevertheless an initial examination of the ways in which these diverse bids have been translated into summary statements of the aims of the projects may be indicative of the ways in which widening participation is being talked about by policy makers, and some practitioners. How do these articulations mesh with or compete with other understandings being operated at the institutional level by senior managers, project directors, practitioners and by the under-represented?

Implications for practice

Given the relative absence of project proposals related to retention and progression, i.e. those located primarily within the mainstream we suggest the following questions as the focus for discussion:

- What alternative discourses would enable us to challenge the dominant discourse of 'educationally poor' learners as individualised and decontextualised?
- What projects would enable us to work in a more egalitarian way with students and their communities?
- What projects would enable us to work towards the transformation of the cultural capital/context of higher education?
- What do we know about the quality of educational experience of the 'educationally rich' in mainstream post-compulsory education? What are the implications for retention and progression for different student groups?

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Inadmissible subjects: exploring the relations between management and adult education

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Introduction

This paper explores the tensions in institutional and student responses to what is admissible, and not admissible, in the curriculum of adult/continuing education. The paper draws particularly on our experiences of teaching human resource development in a Department of Continuing Education. Responses to both the curriculum of human resource development and its institutional location provide a fertile ground for exploring the ways in which discourses shape the subject and those who teach and study it. In exploring these issues, the paper draws on a post-structural framework to argue that such responses arise through the investments of selfhood that education offers. For students, this can be understood in terms of the question 'how do I recognise myself in this course?' At the institutional level, it can be understood through the question 'is this adult/continuing education?'

Our Department has been offering an MA in Training and Human Resource Development for several years now, as well as related provision at undergraduate level. While it is not the only, or the first, Department of Continuing Education in the country to offer a course in this subject area, we are frequently called upon to justify its location to both students and fellow academics. After all, most courses on, and academics concerned with, human resource development – and certainly those concerned with the broader field of human resource management – remain located within business or management schools, and much of the relevant research and writing stems from these sources (Tight 2000). Despite these questions, however, the course has been successful in recruiting and engaging substantial numbers of students. These have included both part-time students - typically from the local area, mature and experienced, and usually working in related jobs - and full-time students - typically from overseas, younger, with little experience and seeking a career in this area.

The paper is organized in four sections. First, the notion of identity, and the varied identities that have been ascribed to the field of human resource development, are explored within a post-structural framework. The varied institutional and student responses to our MA in Training and Human Resource Development are then considered, using both evaluation data and autobiographical reflection. Finally, some conclusions are drawn on what may or may not be admissible in creating both one's own identity and that of a subject's curriculum.

Issues of Identity

Post-structuralists place considerable emphasis on the role of language in shaping both how we know and who we might become (Hughes 2000). In contrast to structuralism, which considers language as having a fixed structure, post-structuralism destabilizes this view. It tends to "stress the shifting, fragmented complexity of meaning (and relatedly of power), rather than a notion of its centralized order" (Beasley 1999, p. 91). Within a post-structuralist position, the term 'discourse' is usually used to indicate a broadening, from a narrow focus on language as a string of words, to:

> *... the way language systematically organizes concepts, knowledge and experience and to the way in which it excludes alternative forms of organization.* (Finlayson 1999, p. 62)

Using the term 'discourse', therefore, places the focus on the systematization of meanings and practices that arise from our relationships with and to language.

Post-structuralists reject the notion of the fixed self of humanism. Rather the self is positioned by, and within, the socially and culturally constructed patterns of language that we label discourse. Moreover, discourses also act in relation to each other. A post-structuralist conception of identity formation, then, stresses the contradictory and precarious processes through which we come into being because of the ways in which discourses operate. Discourses can be drawn upon in multiple ways. They give voice and they give silence. They give rise to differential effects, depending upon who is the speaker and what their position is. Yet, they do not always work in the ways expected, but may have contradictory effects. Discourses produce power, but also hold within them the possibilities for undermining power.

To take an example, Pitt (1997) examines two different responses to the topic of lesbianism in an introductory Women's Studies course. Student A argued that lesbianism was a personal choice and, therefore, had no place in a course on women's oppression. Student B, by contrast, argued that not enough attention was being paid to issues of sexuality and lesbianism. A stereotypical response to this might be that, whilst Student B represents the learner, Student A is clearly resistant to learning about lesbianism, and that these responses are related to their current or emerging identities. Pitt, however, argues that both students are resistant learners, conceptualizing resistance as "the refusal to accept the relevance of certain knowledge to oneself" (ibid, p. 129). Both are rejecting the 'unthought' idea that one's identity is not ready made or fixed. Pitt places her analysis within debates that emphasize the discursive nature of identity formation:

> *(1) Identification precedes identity and (2) identification constitutes the grounds of possibility for the emergence of identity.* (ibid, p. 131)

Or, to put it another way, it is through the processes of identification with discourses that one takes up, and is taken up by, an identity.

The literature on human resource development (e.g. Stewart and McGoldrick 1996) delineates a range of contested identities for the subject field. Thus, we may recognize tensions between theoretical and practical approaches, between managerial and educational strategies, between a critical view of human resource development as a technology for capitalist surveillance and a view of it as a liberating ethic for the workplace (Burton 1992). In this, of course, human resource development is no different from many, perhaps all, other subject fields, particularly those that are emergent rather than established disciplines. Indeed, Watkins sees human resource development as a field contested between disciplines:

> *It should be no surprise... that because different disciplines lay claim to the field and emphasize different roles, each asserts a different definition of the field of practice. Each definition also implies an underlying philosophical stance regarding the nature of learning and instruction. Six characterizations capture the differing foci of these discipline-based definitions: human resource developer as competent performer, developer of human capital, toolmaker, adult educator, researcher/evaluator and leader/change agent.* (1991, p. 242)

To these multiple and competing characterizations we would have to add a recognition that, whilst most of the existing literature on human resource development is western or northern in origin, there are also variations in the identities given to the subject field between the developing and developed worlds, as well as within them.

As lecturers within a Department of Continuing Education who, amongst other responsibilities, teach on an MA in Training and Human Resource Development, our identification of the subject field is, naturally enough, affected by our location. Neither of us was directly involved when the MA was originally approved by the University; indeed, one of us was not in the Department at that time. In subsequently taking on much of the responsibility for the course, however, we were inevitably involved in a complex set of processes, including reacting to existing identifications of the field, articulating our own, and responding to those held elsewhere within the University and by our students.

In our conceptualization, human resource development is centrally about the relations between organizations and learning. It is concerned with how learning is structured and takes place within organizations of different kinds, with how learning relates to the other activities of organizations, and vice-versa, and with the broader social and economic contexts for these activities. It is concerned with developing critical perspectives on these matters, which may, of course, be conceived in a variety of different ways. As a field of study, human resource development draws heavily on both learning and organizational theories. Within the university, this study might (equally) well be located in either a business/management or an education department, and perhaps, as Watkins suggests, elsewhere as well. But we recognize – and, if we didn't, our experience would have forced us to recognize – that this identity is highly contested, and any attempt to fix a core identity is essentially problematic.

Institutional Responses

The responses within our University to our teaching of human resource development highlight the contested nature of the core identity of this subject field. They show how powerfully some may feel that human resource development is inadmissible as anything other than part of the business/management curriculum. We offer examples from our recent experience, relating to the initial approval of the course and to successive internal reviews of our Department's postgraduate provision.

When the MA in Training and Human Resource Development was originally approved by the University, there was some disquiet expressed by some staff within the Business School, who saw the new course as an unwarranted incursion upon their (at least potential) territory. These doubts were dealt with, however, probably largely because the intention then was to focus on part-time recruitment (an indicator of what kinds of students were then seen as most important).

The impact of the University's wish to expand international recruitment became evident, however, in its initial review of the course (as part of a broader periodic review of all of the Department's postgraduate programmes). This strongly encouraged the expansion of recruitment into full-time, and particularly overseas, markets. This was done, requiring substantial shifts in **our own identities.**

The next periodic review by the University was conducted in the wake of the departure of the founding Head of the Department. This provided further evidence of the perceived illegitimacy of human resource development as an educational subject. The Department's response illustrates how the 'educational' was reinforced, in part because other identities came into play. These identities were an interesting mixture of entrepreneurialism and resistance.

A key recommendation of the review was that we should re-structure our MA teaching so as to offer one MA in Continuing Education, within which a specific route would allow students to gain an MA in Continuing Education (Training and Human Resource Development). While this recommendation had some support within the Department, largely because human resource development (and, to some extent, postgraduate provision) was not seen as a core concern, the majority Departmental response was to reject it. This was because the effect of the recommendation would be to destroy the identity of human resource development within the Department and, therefore, the market for the course.

The Department argued instead that the MA programmes should be re-structured so that separate MAs in Training and Human Resource Development and *Continuing* Education were offered, with separate provision for full-time and part-time students. This, inevitably compromised, position was accepted by the University. This resolution was successful in part because it more fully built in business perspectives as part of the course. It also, paradoxically, strengthened the identities of those involved in teaching the course, and their belief that this was a legitimate subject for adult/continuing education.

Student Responses

The response of our students to the course also illustrates the contested nature of the subject field, as well as the varied identities that they bring and develop in response to the experiences they have. No matter how carefully and thoroughly a course is described in publicity material, and in dealings with prospective students, students come with their own perceptions of what the course will contain and how it will be taught. This is, of course, more of a problem in the case of international students, who normally have no opportunity to visit the Department or engage in more extended discussion with us prior to starting the course. Part of the challenge then is to enable students to flexibly pursue their own interests on the course, whilst still maintaining an appropriate framework, level and standard. In doing so, the intent is to encourage students to develop a greater critical understanding of the multiple identities that human resource development may take on. This requires a number of shifts on the part of students, as well as associated shifts by staff.

The evaluations that we regularly encourage students to complete highlight the tensions that exist between the binaries of theory/practice *and* education/business. While these apply to a minority of the students, they are useful in exploring changing identifications during the course. Given that these tensions are evidenced in early evaluations, we would suggest that they are ready made identifications and confirm that one prevalent identification of human resource development is as a practical, business-related subject. These students see their identity as aspirant practitioners of training or human resource development. For them, the key role of the course has to be to develop the skills they will need to do their future jobs:

"too many theories"
"I prefer to learn practical skills rather than theories"
"can we have some practical course... which can help our vocation in the future"
"I expected the taught sessions to be more practical"
"the learning theories... were quite interesting but I need more examples related to training"

Our responses to these kinds of comments have become more sophisticated and complex with each passing year, and illustrate the shifts in curricular and pedagogic rationalisations that a responsive mode gives rise to. One initial reaction was to offer a separate, parallel short course focusing on the development of training skills. A series of visiting seminars by training and human resource development practitioners is also arranged each year. A more recent, and much more demanding, response has been to re-organise the structure and assessment of the curriculum to put more emphasis on theory/practice relations and enable more task- and group-based study. Yet, while these initiatives have all been (generally) welcomed and endorsed by the student body, we still receive critical comments from a minority of students along the lines quoted. This shows the limits on the extent to which staff and course identities may be changed.

The education/business tension is, we would argue, and as our previous comments indicate, at the core of human resource development as a subject field dealing with learning and organisations. These comments are from a minority of our students who are seeking a more instrumental, business-focused approach:

"need for more teaching relating to training rather than education"
"the lectures were about adult education... [rather than] HRD"
"the distinction between continuing education and HRD is not very clear"
"education... is neither my area of interest nor the topic of my degree"

These students see their identity as business men and women, not as educators. For them, the course should focus exclusively on what has been called the 'hard' approach to human resource development (see Stewart and McGoldrick 1996) within private sector companies.

These comments have been rather more difficult to respond to than those quoted previously, because they relate, at least potentially, to our institutional location. Nevertheless, in addition to the responses already noted, we have endeavoured to react here by developing more opportunities – through links with local employers and professional bodies – for students, where they wish, to carry out projects in work environments. As in the case of the theory/practice balance, however, we do not expect these responses to stop, at least not entirely, critical comments concerning the education/business tension. Nor, as already stated, do we believe it would be possible, through yet more careful publicity and screening of applications, to achieve a near perfect match between student expectations and course content and approach.

Conclusion

Of course, it may well be the case that the kinds of tensions we have been discussing between alternative conceptualisations and expectations of a particular subject field are present, at least to some extent, in most, perhaps all, courses. It seems likely, however, that they vary significantly in their intensity. Thus, Titus (2000) has examined, also through the medium of student evaluations, how students resist the discussion of feminism in teacher education courses. In our case, the breadth within the subject field - between the more entrepreneurial, private sector approaches to management and the more egalitarian, public sector approaches to education – also offers great scope for disagreement, tension and student resistance.

The autobiographical and evaluation data that we have discussed provides ample illustration of how discourses may shape a subject and those who teach and study it. Some students and staff do not identify human resource development with(in) adult/continuing education. For some, indeed – and both from within and without adult/continuing education - this reaction may be so strong that they view its inclusion as inadmissible.

However, the situation is more complex and involving than this. In response to such perceptions, we have altered the ways in which we teach the course – and, therefore, both its identity and ours – to enable students to take a more practical and business-oriented approach, where they wish. In other words, the course has assumed, more explicitly than formerly, multiple identities. At the same time, most of our students continue to come to a greater realisation, through their engagement with the course, of the multiple and contradictory meanings associated with their field of study. These identities and meanings are, of course, by no means fixed, but will continue to change and evolve.

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Opening pathways to inclusion: the importance of non-accredited learning in the lives of students in the Local Authority sector.

Ann Jackson and Belinda Whitwell: East Riding of Yorkshire Community Education Service, UK.

Introduction

The current UK government agenda on education, training and employment has drawn adult education in from its traditionally peripheral status to a much more central position. However, as the *Learning to Succeed* White Paper (1999) and the subsequent legislative process make clear, there is a hierarchy of importance as far as learning is concerned, with accredited programmes being seen as the priority, and consequently being preferentially funded. Significantly also, the commitment to lifelong learning has been skewed by a particular focus on the sixteen to nineteen age group. This situation is understandable in view of the government's training targets and commitment to addressing the issue of social inclusion through ensuring that young people do not fall through the education/training/employment net. However, there are fears that we are being driven down a road towards a 'certified' rather than a 'learning' society (Marks, 2000), where any improvement in achieving those elusive training targets will ironically owe more to the 'conveyor belt effect' than to any real increase in adult learning (Gorard, Rees and Selwyn, 2000).

Nevertheless, there are opportunities for adult educators to continue to open out the debate into a consideration of formal and informal, accredited and non-accredited learning across the lifespan and the impact of that learning on individuals, their families and communities. There is also evidence that the government is at least prepared to listen to some of the points being made, with the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning being set up and research reports such as *Learning in Later Life* (Dench and Regan 2000) being funded. In addition, there have been opportunities in the field for partnerships consisting of agencies and organisations involved in post-16 education to bid for funding for lifelong learning and widening participation.

In the East Riding of Yorkshire, a partnership headed up by the Community Education Service on behalf of the Local Authority included in its submission for the Lifelong Learning Development Fund a commitment to increasing participation from those currently under-represented on learning programmes. As part of the process, the Community Education Service undertook to design non-accredited provision to specifically target new user groups, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative.

The Context

The East Riding of Yorkshire came into being following Local Government reorganisation in 1996, and geographically is the largest single tier authority in the country. Although there are a number of small towns, the area is predominantly rural and poorly served by public transport. Rural deprivation and isolation are therefore key issues for the authority. There are also pockets of urban deprivation in the townships of Beverley, Bridlington and notably Goole.

In common with much of the UK, the population of the East Riding is ageing.

Ethnic minority groups, however, constitute less than 0.5% of residents.

The Community Education Service was formed on reorganisation by pulling together the previously separate Adult Education and Youth Services. To cater for the needs of such a dispersed population, provision is based at Centres across the East Riding, and is further localised by utilising available premises, such as village halls, schools, libraries and community centres. Adult Education provision is funded from two sources. Non-accredited courses are supported by the Local Authority, while accredited (Schedule 2) courses are funded by the Further Education Funding Council, to which the Service bids as an External Institution. This results in a broad and varied programme amounting to some 1,500 courses across the East Riding, with approximately 20,000 students (28,000 enrolments) attending.

The student profile for the Service differs significantly from the national learner profile. Women attending adult education courses across the East Riding considerably outnumber men – in schedule 2 programmes there are over twice as many women as men, and in non-schedule 2 programmes over three times as many. Nationally, men participating in learning still outnumber women, although the gap is narrowing (Tuckett & Sargant, 1999). A disproportionately high number of those aged over 60 attend the Service's provision, with around 33% of students falling within that age-group. This runs counter to the observation in the NIACE survey that 'the older people are, the less likely they are to participate in learning.' (Tuckett and Sargant, 1999, 11). However, there is evidence to suggest that Local Authority adult education provision does attract higher numbers of both women and older learners (Dench and Regan, 2000) and the East Riding figures tend to mirror those of similar Services (Carlton and Soulsby, 1999, 34).

The proportion of students from ethnic minority groups participating in Service provision is higher than would be anticipated from the East Riding residents profile, and other issues relating to equality of opportunity which are proactively addressed by the Service include disability and mental health.

The Study

This small-scale study was undertaken as part of the evaluation process to which the Community Education Service was committed under the Lifelong Learning Development Plan. Having specifically targeted funding at reaching new participant groups, at access and widening participation, and at addressing rural isolation, we now needed to evidence how far we had succeeded in that intention. We also saw this as an opportunity to look in depth not only at the programmes specifically put on as part of Lifelong Learning initiative, but also at a major part of the non-schedule 2 curriculum, which adult educators frequently justify as non-threatening access provision without necessarily having the evidence to back up their assertions (McGivney, 1992, 19). We see the study, therefore, as making a small contribution to the growing body of evidence concerning the value of non-accredited learning.

In addition, we were aware that the project would be professionally useful to us, as one of us has a whole-service responsibility for curriculum and quality assurance, while the other has a key-worker role for the development of Art and related subjects. We identified Art as the non-schedule 2 curriculum area on which to focus as it constitutes a large slice of provision across the East Riding - 96 Art courses of various kinds were running in the Service when we began our survey in the Autumn of 1999 – and the vast majority of those courses do not lead to accreditation - 87 non-accredited courses were running as opposed to 9 accredited ones.

The survey was conducted in three phases. In the first phase, data from the enrolment forms of students in all the targeted courses was collated. This gave us information about students' age, gender, ethnicity, disability, and employment status. It also enabled us to track how local students were to the provision they attended by plotting post-codes. During the second phase, two students from each Art class and Lifelong Learning funded programme across the Service were randomly selected and sent a questionnaire, with a stamped addressed envelope enclosed to encourage return. 60% of Art students and 40% of students on Lifelong Learning programmes responded. The questionnaire enabled us to identify the age at which students completed their formal education, whether they were new students, their reasons for coming, and future learning intentions. A final question asked whether the student would be prepared to attend an individual interview with one of us lasting approximately 45 minutes. The interviews constituted the third phase of the project. Positive responses were received from 36 of the Art students and 10 of those from Lifelong Learning programmes. From these, 25 were randomly chosen and interviewed.

Clearly, a small-scale study of this nature cannot pretend to any statistical validity, but a number of factors emerged from the project which we can further explore and learn from as a Service and which support findings elsewhere in the field. It also reinforced for us as adult educators the value of making time – and taking time - to talk to our students.

The Findings

The initial data gathered from the enrolment forms indicated to us that there were some noticeable differences between the two groups of students in the survey. The students attending Art courses showed an intensifying of the skewing of the Service's student profile towards older learners, with two thirds being over 60 years of age. The ratio of women (70%) to men (30%) attending these courses was similar to the student profile, although the gender imbalance reduced slightly amongst students over 60. Only a small number of students aged over 60, however, attended the programmes funded as part of the Lifelong Learning initiative, and the greatest proportion of these students (40%) were in the 30 – 45 age group. In this respect, the Lifelong Learning students differed from the Service profile, but more nearly matched the national profile. Women (65%) continued to outnumber men (35%) on these programmes.

An investigation of students' post-codes indicated that for both groups the local nature of the provision was important. Although this correlation was somewhat less noticeable in the suburban commuter belt west of Hull where public transport and car ownership make travelling to courses more feasible, it was still possible to identify the location of courses by the prevalence of the local post-codes.

A further feature shared by both the Art courses and the Lifelong Learning provision was timing, with 80% of these programmes taking place during the day. This compares with the Service profile of 45% daytime and 55% evening provision.

The Service has a fee remission policy which allows some students, including the unemployed and those over 60, to pay a reduced fee, while those on a range of means tested benefits receive a further reduction or pay no fee at all. This latter category serves as an indicator of deprivation, and 5.5% of students attending Art courses claim this level of benefit. However, this over-all figure conceals some significant variations between different areas of the East Riding.

The returns to the questionnaire sent out to the students indicated that the majority had not extended their formal education beyond the minimum school leaving age. Most Art students had left at 14 (17%), 15 (33%) or 16 (23%) years old, while 52% of the younger cohort of Lifelong Learning students had left at 16. While researchers have over a considerable time pointed to a link between the length of formal education and continuing participation (Knox, 1977; Cross, 1981; McGivney, 1993; Tuckett and Sargant, 1999), Carlton and Soulsby point out that this is less apparent in local authority adult education than in other areas of post-16 education (Carlton and Soulsby, 1999, 33). Certainly it would appear from the returns to this questionnaire that the Community Education Service is encouraging the take-up of learning opportunities amongst those who are statistically less likely to participate, and is thereby addressing an access issue.

The courses funded as part of the Lifelong Learning bid were specifically intended to attract new users to the Service and the returns to the questionnaire indicated that this aim had been addressed, with 36% reporting that they had not attended Adult Education courses at all before. The Art programme, however, was not targeted in this way, and a very small proportion of the students on these courses were completely new to Adult Education (3.5%). Indeed, the returns confirmed that many of them had attended not only Art but a wide range of other non-accredited programmes – 41 in total - from Information Technology to Yoga, and from Line Dancing to French. This suggests the important part that Adult Education was playing in the lives of some of these students, something which was explored in greater depth during the subsequent interviews.

The questionnaire also asked the students to identify why they had come along to their chosen course, and for both groups the most frequently cited reason was to increase their skill or knowledge. There was also agreement that meeting others with a similar interest was fairly important, as were appropriate timing and location of the courses. This area of student motivation and barriers to learning was again returned to during the extended interviews.

Finally, the questionnaire gave us an opportunity to gain some insight into future intentions, and in this respect the two groups diverged once more. While 68% of those attending one of the Lifelong Learning programmes indicated that they would like to go on to do a different course, 86% of the Art students wanted to repeat the course they were attending. This raised issues for us around progression and development which we were also able to address with students during the interviews.

The one-to-one extended interviews, therefore, allowed us to further explore strands emerging from the survey so far, as well as to tease out whether the fact that these programmes were non-accredited was significant for these students. The interviews were loosely structured around a series of open questions which ensured that the same topics were covered in each instance, but students were encouraged to elaborate on aspects which were important to them. Although those agreeing to participate had originally been asked to set aside approximately 45 minutes for the process, many of the sessions lasted for well over an hour, and as interviewers we appreciated the importance of allowing the time for rapport and trust to develop, and for the layers of meaning and motivation to surface. Again, there were some identifiable differences in the responses of the two groups of students. However, for all of those interviewed, the fact that coming along to their chosen programme had been a very conscious decision emerged strongly.

For some of the students attending Art courses, coming to adult education courses had been, on and off, part of their lives since leaving formal education.

I like to do an adult education class every year.

I've been going to adult education classes ever since leaving school. I've followed lots of courses, accredited and non-accredited.

For others it was a choice they had made when they believed they had enough time to indulge their interest. This time may have become available when their children left home, but for most of the Art students the extra time resulted from retirement.

It was always part of my ambition in my retirement to find time to go to an adult education class.

When I retired then I had the time to take up painting.

The Dench and Regan study similarly found that, although the prevalence of work-related learning meant retirement 'can be a trigger out of learning…the in-depth interviews also illustrate how retirement can be a trigger into more, or different learning.' (Dench and Regan, 2000).

Some students mentioned particular reasons for wanting to go to courses when they retired.

Painting provides something that keeps the brain active.

Art is very relaxing.

The students on Art courses had chosen the subject from the range of activities available to them because they were interested in learning how to paint, and indeed were often quite specific about the medium and subject matter they wanted to focus on. They were also very aware of the social nature of the classes. The friendliness of the classes and the skills of the tutors at putting newcomers at ease helped to overcome any initial qualms which students had when coming along for the first time. Students talked about the importance of meeting people on the course with whom they knew they would be able to share an interest, and perhaps widen their sphere of friends. Some talked about how they or other members of the class would overcome disability or illness to come along because seeing their friends and sharing experiences in the class-room was so important to them. These findings are again supported by Dench and Regan, who point out the positive impact of learning on health and social involvement.

For most of the students questioned, coming to their Art class was an important part of their week and their year, and the local nature of the provision was stressed, as was the timing – in particular daytime provision. These practical considerations made courses accessible, especially for the retired, and in this respect the Service is clearly removing barriers to participation for these students.

As previously indicated, a significant number of Art students had been coming to the same course for many years, fifteen years in one instance. The interviews gave us the opportunity to explore with them whether they were continuing to learn and develop, or whether remaining had meant repetition and lack of challenge, something which had also been identified as a concern in the *Older and Bolder* discussion paper (Carlton and Soulsby, 1999, 29).

Students were very clear that they were continuing to learn and were aware of their progress over time. The student who had attended for over fifteen years had kept a numbered record of each painting he had made, amounting to well over a thousand across this period! Students pointed to their increased technical skill, but also to the way in which learning about Art had altered how they looked at the world – in terms of colour, form, perspective. What emerged was that in a subject like Art, progression in terms of improved technique and broadening out into other media could take place within one course pursued over time and did not necessarily require a move to another course. What was apparent throughout the interviews was the sense of achievement and the enjoyment which students got out of their chosen learning activity.

When asked whether the possibility of accreditation would have made a difference to their decision to attend, the Art students gave a mixed response. Some said they would welcome accreditation as a challenge, others were indifferent as long as the course was meeting their other requirements, while the remainder were very definite about not wanting accreditation. Indeed, one student explained that she changed classes on a yearly basis specifically to avoid accreditation. For some, it was seen as a pressure and a restriction they did not want and as irrelevant. These responses echo those of the older learners interviewed by Dench and Regan (2000, 36-7).

As already noted, a significant proportion of the students attending the Lifelong Learning programmes were new to Adult Education, and therefore some of the issues raised above were not applicable. However, a student with mental and physical health problems who was attending a confidence-building course reinforced in a most emphatic way many of the points made by the Art students. She had attended a range of courses focused on health issues and coping strategies – during one period of comparative health she had attended a course nearly every day. She stressed the enjoyment she experienced from the classes and from meeting people with similar interests. None of the programmes she had attended in recent years had been accredited, and she considered accreditation irrelevant and inappropriate for what she wanted. For her, progression was a personal and not always linear process.

From your point of view, it might be sticking here and not moving on, but for me, health issues are part of my life. This sort of programme is constantly a matter of moving on.

Some of the other students who had attended the Lifelong Learning courses exhibited a much more instrumental and work-oriented approach, especially with regards to IT. These students were women of working age who recognised the importance of IT skills in securing and keeping employment, and even those who had chosen the non-accredited programme because they lacked confidence acknowledged that qualifications were important. Interestingly, a number of those interviewed explained that they didn't *like* computers, but they felt they *ought* to acquire the skills.

The findings of this study support claims as to the value of non-accredited learning for those who want to try something in a non-threatening environment, for those for whom the pressures associated with accreditation would be inappropriate, and for those whose stage in life makes accreditation irrelevant. It has raised the issue of progression outside of the accreditation framework which currently tends to proscribe and validate it, and the place of student perceptions – and tutor perceptions – in this process. The study also indicates the contribution learning opportunities of this kind can make to the social involvement, health and well-being – physical and mental – of the elderly in particular.

As a Service, it has highlighted for us the continuing importance of ensuring our provision is delivered where people want it, when people want it. In addition, it has brought into focus for us a debate as to how far we address imbalances in our student profile, and how far we further develop those strengths which counter regional and national imbalances and inequalities.

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Education for Inclusion or Imprisoned in the Global Classroom?

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In 1976 Ivan Illich and Etienne Verne invoked the spectre of being 'Imprisoned in the Global Classroom'. This was their response to the upsurge in enthusiasm and support for the relatively new concept, Lifelong Education, which was being promoted by international bodies like UNESCO in the interests of 'training men (sic) for democracy, humanistic development and change' (Faure, 1972, 101). In direct contrast to this, Illich and Verne envisaged a scenario where the learner/worker might easily become the object of a 'training he (sic) does not want, from which he hardly benefits but which serves to adapt, integrate and dominate him '(1976, 9).

Now, 25 years on, as we move into the 21st century, the Lifelong Education dreamt of, almost exclusively by the liberal education establishment has somehow been transmogrified into a universally-acclaimed Lifelong Learning which is embraced by international bodies, national governments, employers, trade unions and educators alike. This Lifelong Learning is underpinned by a clear economic rationale, puts an emphasis on human capital and employability and appears to be flourishing within an increasingly marketised and consumer-oriented world.

As part of this learning revolution, Lifelong Learning has also been identified as having a key social policy role in promoting social inclusion. This paper sets out to investigate and problematise the role of lifelong learning in the interests of social inclusion. The first half will focus on a brief review of evidence from recently completed UK Widening Provision projects, framed by my own experience in community education and widening participation work over more than two decades. It will identify and interrogate the different methodologies, epistemologies and ideologies in operation within these programmes as a way of raising questions both about Higher Education policies and the broader impact of Lifelong Learning policies on social inclusion. Going back to Illich, it will explore the contemporary dangers implicit in adult education for social inclusion, in particular its implication in new forms of governmentality and surveillance. From this critique, the second half of this paper will move on to consider the role and potential for social inclusion of two forms of adult learning within a wider civil society: collective learning in popular and social movements and more individualized informal learning within the wider community.

A starting point in this investigation is to identify the problem of social exclusion and the role that lifelong learning might play in combatting it. In many ways, social exclusion is just a new way of expressing long-standing economic, political, social and cultural inequalities. The 'facts' of this inequality are not widely disputed. At a macro level, a growing economic rift has been acknowledged between 'rich' and 'poor' nations, as well as within nations and between communities (UNESCO 1997, Office of National Statistics 2000). At a micro and meso level, it often translates into a growing marginalisation and exclusion of those who are poor, unemployed or ethnically different, often all three. It is in relation to this particular dimension of inequality that the new discourse of social inclusion has been deployed, although it is a moot point whether this represents a new and overdue emphasis on citizenship rights or just a convenient translation of economic inequality into more readily identifiable (and manageable) political terms (Phillips 1999). In this time of global market primacy, government retreats from progressive taxation policies and anxieties about welfare dependence, politicians can't do much about economic inequality but they can have a better stab at tackling problems of social participation. If you can't change the situation, then re-define the problem!

Social purpose educators like myself need to maintain a critical perspective on social inclusion and government motives for promoting it, but we should also engage with it actively as part of our commitment to social justice, greater social and economic equality and the promotion of a critical democracy . As such we should try to promote a Lifelong Learning that does not serve 'to adapt, integrate and dominate' learners (Illich and Verne op. cit) nor imprison them in the global classroom but that recognizes diversity and common interests and serves to open up options for individuals and groups alike. In this process, a key question is what exactly are the terms of inclusion.

Inclusion - On Whose Terms?

The dominant model of social inclusion in the UK, the European Union and beyond involves inclusion through the labour market. Here, learning has a central role to play in promoting human capital development and fostering employability. A key part of this, certainly in the UK, is the development of Widening Participation in Higher Education. Historically, the UK has been seen to suffer in terms of international economic competitiveness and productivity from the narrowness of its HE baseline and the consequent lack of appropriate skills and knowledge across the (potential) workforce. This idea of education as an investment in human capital is certainly a powerful argument, but one which still needs to be interrogated, more particularly on its effect on social inclusion. In the past I have argued against reducing educational responses to social exclusion merely to questions of access and participation within the formal education system (Johnston 1999). Here, I want to put more flesh on these bones through an analysis of 46 government-funded projects on Widening Provision which ran from 1995-1999. This analysis will draw on my own experience as a director of one of these projects but more substantially on published evaluations of the programme as a whole and a wide range of different projects within the programme (HEFCE, 1998, HEFCE, 1999). I will use this evidence and my own experience to identify, explore and interrogate the different methodologies, epistemologies and ideologies in operation in relation to UK learning strategies geared towards widening participation, and particularly, social inclusion.

The Widening Provision programme needs to be seen in context.

In 1995, the Widening Participation initiative was a small project programme, not seen as central to their mission by many HE institutions. In 1998 (when the report was written), the issues it addresses are at the centre of the Government's policy agenda (HEFCE 1998:4)

Thus the projects both preceded and anticipated a stronger government focus on widening participation. As such, they were more likely to be bottom-up in their approach than subsequent more 'mainstreamed' and directive, government-led initiatives and policies. Equally significantly, their evaluation took place within a new context of increased government support for and direction of Widening Participation strategies.

Not surprisingly, given the policy context identified above, Widening Provision projects were stronger on generating action than on influencing mainstream curriculum development or institutional/cultural change. A first review of the projects identifies an impressive range of innovative methodologies geared towards social inclusion: imaginative outreach work with a wide range of excluded or at least under-represented target groups; the development of new partnerships to engage with new student groups; community-based approaches to educational guidance; a variety of community development strategies; the use of existing students as researchers, mentors, role models and researchers (HEFCE 1999: 5-6). Notwithstanding these innovations in reaching new student groups, from a wider perspective on social inclusion, it is epistemological and ideological issues that are most illuminative. What is particularly noteworthy is that the curriculum innovations specifically highlighted in the HEFCE executive summary all involve essentially pedagogical strategies framed within a conventional HE epistemology, namely, preparatory programmes, bridging and induction programmes, summer schools, associate student schemes, study skills programmes. In contrast, projects which more directly and radically addressed epistemological questions, for example, the collaborative development of Islamic Studies at Leeds University, learning for regeneration at Sunderland, negotiated, tailor-made courses with and for local communities in Lancaster and Sussex were predominantly categorized under the heading of 'not explicitly "HE level"'or as having 'communal objectives'. (HEFCE 1999:9) Such an emergent epistemological distinction raises key questions about levels of study in HE, about the purposes of HE and about the most appropriate forms of knowledge to promote social inclusion. In this context, it is interesting to note Barnett's more radical and inclusive view that:

The wider world is looking for three things from its universities: a continuing flow of new stories….a critical interrogation, and even rebuttal, of existing ideas; and the development of human capacities to live both at ease and purposively amid …uncertainty. (Barnett 2000:71)

The above, largely hidden, epistemological issues translate into a clear ideological tension, this time explicitly identified in the 1999 HEFCE report, namely that between individual and communal objectives. The 'individual' strand is characterized as focusing on individuals, linear progression and the transmission of conventional HE knowledge. Its work is seen as being enhanced by flexible delivery and the raising of awareness, individual self-confidence and trust in HE. Its success is to be measured in terms of numbers of entrants or graduates from particular excluded or under-represented groups. In contrast, the 'collective' strand is seen as focusing on the internal resources of groups and communities and their engagement with society, socially, politically and economically, on collaborative learning and shared tasks relevant to their living and working circumstances. Perhaps significantly, no particular measure of success was identified for this strand, although the possibility of this communal activity providing a springboard for individual progression within HE was flagged as a notable spin-off. (HEFCE 1999: 46-47)

The above epistemological and ideological tensions or distinctions are not new to social purpose educators like myself. However, the way they are characterized both reflects the predominant HE agenda and prompts new fears of being 'Imprisoned in the Global Classroom'. Judged on this evidence, Higher Education's contribution to social inclusion means inclusion for some in a HE system which, although expanding, still adopts a 'banking' concept of education and a predominantly reproductive curriculum. Indeed, it could be argued that recent moves towards the development of more vocational degrees only re-inforce the tendency that HE schooling 'is the advertising agency which makes you believe you need the society as it is' (Illich 1971:114). It is an inward-looking, self-interested, unproblematised and partial inclusion, albeit often on more sensitive, user-friendly and consumerist terms than before. This reflects a Higher Education system which in many ways exemplifies Illich's claim thirty years previously that schooling develops 'the habit of self-defeating consumption of services and alienating production, the tolerance for institutional dependence and the recognition of institutional rankings' (Illich 1971: 77) where learners are still '"schooled" to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence and fluency with the ability to say something new.' (Illich 1971:9). This paper intends to look beyond these narrow parameters to explore a more expansive and extensive Lifelong Learning approach to social inclusion where HE can play a key part. But first it will examine some of the factors which contribute in the first place to such a narrow approach to social inclusion on the part of HE.

Performance indicators have been with us for some time and are often seen to have been developed as part of the hegemonic project of the New Right. Nevertheless, in the UK they have been taken on board and extended by New Labour as part of its mission for Widening Participation and Social Inclusion. Higher Education, like other educational sectors, now abounds with targets, monitoring processes and performance indicators as it responds to the demands of a pervasive audit culture. In this context, there is a real danger that learning for social inclusion becomes implicated in new forms of governmentality and surveillance. A monitorable quantitative dimension is certainly necessary to assess how far institutions have progressed in widening participation and social inclusion in their own terms, that is recruiting new students from under-represented or 'excluded' groups. However, the danger is that alongside this, particular forms of measurement begin to dominate the Widening Participation agenda and these performance indicators become re-ified as unproblematic ends in themselves, all part of a process where access to HE becomes proxy for Social Inclusion. With this in mind, it is instructive to note the headings of the proposed performance indicators from the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education: access, progression, outcomes, efficiency and employability (Update on Inclusion, 1999) and to see exactly how they are operationalised to take account of social inclusion. In this context, it is also worth noting that at a recent SCUTREA Conference I attended, a group of experienced adult educators in HE were completely unable to agree on any Performance Indicators for Citizenship and Social Inclusion, with discussion foundering on questions on what social inclusion meant for society as whole and for different social groups within it, whether it involved individual or collective development and whether any of this could be measured in any meaningful way (SCUTREA 2000).

Gus John, a long-standing and influential advocate for social inclusion is unequivocal in his views:

> *(The) ideals (of widening participation and social inclusion) have foundered on the rock of managerialism and have been virtually lost in the sea of contradictions that characterizes the implementation of Government policy on education and training for non-achieving or low-achieving Post-16s* (John 2000:3)

While there is not enough space in this paper to develop a full-scale critique of this educational managerialism, it may be worth identifying the potentially negative and contradictory impact of several HE 'innovations' and 'reforms' under the influence of an audit culture, the way this can contribute to new students becoming 'Imprisoned in the Global Classroom'. Under pressures to increase student numbers and widen participation in HE, outreach work can become merely a covert form of marketing and recruitment, educational guidance an imprisoning institutional straitjacket, the accreditation of prior learning an asset-stripping of personal and collective experience, discrete levels of study an unnecessary form of regulation and a brake on intellectual enquiry and linear notions of progression a curb on wider learning ambitions and goals. Two examples from my recent personal experience illustrate this tendency in a different way. In the first instance, I was surprised when a conference presentation of an innovative widening participation project involving all kinds of exciting, inclusionary, cross-cultural, community-based learning initiatives was 'evaluated' by the project leader almost exclusively on its success in ensuring individual 'progression' into the HE system (NIACE 2000). The second involves the implications of on-going discussions about the possibility of developing a 'Smartcard' to facilitate participation in Lifelong Learning across Southampton, where the danger is that this system might also be used to privilege certain forms of learning and track, monitor and regulate who does what learning - Lifelong Learning as a new form of social control (Coffield 1999).

Learning outside the Global Classroom?

Having identified some of the dangers of a Lifelong Learning approach to social inclusion which is over-individualized, over-regulated and over dependent on access to the formal education system, it may be time to outline and review some alternative learning approaches in the interests of social inclusion, more particularly from an HE perspective. Returning briefly to the HEFCE evaluation of the Widening Provision programme, the report suggests a new funding stream for communal educational work:

> *There is a need to provide separate resources, not based on student numbers, to support institutions in developing the capacity of local and regional communities, based on agreed strategies, public consultation and evaluation.....(this) community capacity building work has collective, rather than individual objectives* (HEFCE 1999: 9).

I welcome this suggestion in that it offers the prospect of a different more diverse HE, albeit project-based, a more communal approach and a closer connection with informal learning in the interests of social inclusion. Indeed, such an emphasis resonates with a broader European approach to social inclusion through lifelong learning, "social learning" which consists of more informal learning processes, for example:

> *...learning how to build personal networks, learning to communicate about the dynamic and complex social conditions of late modern life and learning to develop new interactive routines* (Van der Veen 1996:6)

As Van der Veen puts it:

> *Formal courses and training don't make any sense for people in danger of becoming social excluded (sic) when they don't see a connection to (the) underlying learning process (of social learning)* (Van der Veen 1996:5)

It is interesting to note that this European perspective underpins recent more community-based learning initiatives in the UK such as the development of the Adult and Community Learning Fund. Here the emphasis is much more on collective learning and local capacity-building. Perhaps just as importantly, it is being monitored and evaluated in a much less, top-down and prescriptive way and a more collaborative and personal spirit, as was evidenced by the range of creative and developmental work being discussed at the recent NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) Conference on 'Quality, Equality and Adult Learning'.

The rest of this paper will consider briefly the role and potential for social inclusion of two forms of adult learning within a wider civil society: collective learning in popular and social movements and more individualized informal learning within the wider community. It will also try to identify a role in these developments for adult educators in universities.

In recent times, there has been an upsurge of interest in Popular Education with the development of Popular Education forums in Australia, Spain, Northern Ireland and Scotland to complement longer-established Popular Education movements in South America. Key to popular education movements are an alliance of educators and activists, an explicit political commitment, and an engagement with cultural action with communities of resistance and struggle (PEN 2000) This offers an approach to social inclusion which involves collective and pro-active learning with an explicit focus on the development of 'really useful knowledge', knowledge which is very distinct from adaptive, 'merely useful knowledge'. It is knowledge which is political and practical, geared specifically towards influencing and changing our everyday lives; it is knowledge 'which is calculated to make you free' (Johnson 1998: 21-22). This approach has a number of advantages in relation to promoting social inclusion without imprisoning people within the global classroom. First, it is essentially outward-looking, focusing on the link between learning and social action. Second, its curriculum comes out of the everyday experience of social movements and communities of resistance. Third, based as it is on the everyday experience of local people, it is able to address issues of equality while, at the same time, acknowledging diversity, in making productive links between 'lived difference' and common purposes (Petrie and Shaw 1999).

There is tremendous potential for such popular education approaches in developing a more critical, participative and ultimately more inclusive democracy as is increasingly being documented across the world (see Crowther et al 1999, Dekeyser 1999, Foley 1999, Johnston 1999, Walters 1997, Welton 1998). However, a focus on social inclusion raises two outstanding questions. At a more political level, efforts may need to be made to ensure that popular education's commitment is not too exclusive, that popular educators do not end up preaching only to the converted but make themselves available and known beyond like-minded, ideologically committed groups. Here it is reassuring to note the evidence from two recent publications in the UK (Crowther et al 1999, McGivney 1999a) that document dynamic learning amongst community groups and social movements, many of whom do not have long-standing or fully-formed political agendas but are responding to particular circumstances where they are often 'acting in defence of the public realm, concerned with the autonomy of the people' (Jarvis (1997:163). At a more educational level, further critical and developmental work may be necessary to go beyond the rhetoric and explore and tease out exactly what learning is taking place in Popular Education, how it develops, what is its impact and what is the role of the educator.

In this broad context, alongside the recent growth and dissemination of popular education practice, the pioneering, more theoretical work on the inner and educational processes of different social movements and the role of the 'normative professional' conducted by Dekeyser (1999) and other academics offers further scope and hope for a more extensive adult educator engagement with issues of social inclusion. Dekeyser, in investigating the inter-relationship of the different functions of social movements i.e. activation, education, animation and service in the context of an increasingly individualized and pluralist society, has identified the role of the professional advisor to social movements as shifting from that of providing content and themes to helping with methods and interpretation, from problem-solving to problem-posing. This is an observation which is backed up by my own, limited, contact with social movements and by the analysis of a range of adult educators (Foley

1999, Usher, Bryant and Johnston 1997, Welton 1998). There is a clear role for university adult educators to explore this further in making and researching connections between learning and social action, between informal and formal learning as part of a an inclusive but not imprisoning approach to Lifelong Learning.

While Popular Education offers a way forward for a more extensive, more democratic learning for social inclusion, its explicitly collectivist focus may also mean that it misses out on engaging critically with certain aspects of the individualization of a Risk Society, with more individualized informal learning outside of the global classroom. It is here that a return to Illich may be helpful. While his deschooling and imprisoning critiques have been widely acknowledged, his alternatives have largely been dismissed as politically naïve, paradoxically elitist and over individualistic. However, these criticisms have been predominantly levelled at his alternatives to schooling as whole. When we consider the post compulsory sector, particularly in the context of the growing 'individualization' of society, they may have greater merit. I believe that Illich's ideas of 'learning webs' incorporating reference services to educational objects, skill exchanges, peer matching, and reference services to educators-at-large (1971:81) provide different possibilities for Lifelong Learning and Social Inclusion in contemporary society and new opportunities for social purpose adult educators to engage with excluded individuals and groups. Ideas of peer matching have already been incorporated into a growing range of mentoring programmes for excluded groups, the key for a wider, more diverse social inclusion being to avoid over-regulating or institutionalizing them. Similarly, learning exchanges have in the past been able to build on people's existing interests, on what they already know, to promote new and dynamic forms of co-learning. Indeed, in community-based settings, learning exchange approaches have even demonstrated some success in engaging with 'Excluded Men' (Johnston 1987, McGivney 1999b). Lastly, new Internet technology offers considerable possibilities for extending reference services to educational objects (i.e. learning resources) and educators-at-large (i.e. professionals, para professionals, those with particular knowledge and expertise in specific areas). All these offer scope for a more inclusive adult learning that can build learning mutuality, cope with and counter some of the worst and most exclusionary aspects of 'individualization'. The fostering of such a range of learning webs can complement more formal learning opportunities without being over-dependent on institutions and without serving merely to 'adapt, integrate and dominate' the learner in an over-regulated global classroom (Illich and Verne 1976: 9).

Tom Lovett (1975) incorporated many of Illich's learning web ideas into a more collective Freirian context when he explored four specific roles for the community adult educator: network agent, resources agent, educational guide and teacher. Now there are possibilities for social purpose adult educators to revisit and re-develop these ideas in the more individualized context of the 21st century, as a way of working with excluded groups and individuals, taking account of difference and diversity, identifying common interests and, where appropriate, forging common purposes, without necessarily incorporating and controlling them within a global classroom (see Johnston 1998). University adult educators can play a key role in exploring, promoting and developing this form of inclusive learning. In this endeavour, key issues to be investigated will be how individualized and autonomous informal learners are and want to be, whether common purposes, common interests and new learning communities can be identified, to what extent such networks can be accessible and democratically accountable and whether this holds out any prospect of the development of a more extensive and vibrant informal learning in civil society, more convivial learning institutions and a comprehensive and inclusive lifelong learning culture.

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Partnerships: a common sense approach to inclusion?[1]

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There is an increasing emphasis on inter-agency, inter-professional, multi-agency and multi-professional partnerships as a means of nurturing social inclusion. Both compulsory and post-compulsory education are central pillars in the UK's 'battle' against exclusion. Existing professional and service divisions are seen as creating barriers: a source of further exclusion for the disenfranchised. 'Joined-up solutions' mean educators from higher, further and community education are called upon to work with welfare agencies, regeneration projects and voluntary organisations. The proliferating inter-agency, inter-professional collaborative approaches have gained the status of being regarded as the common sense approach; the joined-up solution to the joined-up problem. Such discourse has popular appeal and has achieved hegemonic status, going largely unchallenged, widely welcomed and subjected to scant unbiased analysis. Specialised, compartmentalised professions were once 'common sense' but now staff are required to work together to ensure co-ordination, avoid duplication, share knowledge and information and to create new approaches through drawing creatively on a widened range of techniques. The merit of this approach tends to be assumed: Richards and Horder note that 'few voices are heard arguing against collaboration' (Richards and Horder 1999: 45) although Thompson warns that 'partnership' has become a 'buzz-word' and thus 'runs the risk of being dismissed as a fad or fashion, and its significance as a practice principle lost in the process' (Thompson 1998: 212). Little research has been conducted into the aspects of inter-agency work which are conducive to success or otherwise. However, people currently involved in partnerships are interested in identifying the elements which contribute to success in achieving the identified aims in order to transfer the learning. Whether, in the longer term, partnerships will be established as the new orthodoxy or eclipsed by some new trend, its current ascendancy calls out for further academic interrogation.

Q: Are there many partnerships?
A: Yes, and the number appears to be growing.

Local authorities are required to produce a plethora of interagency plans, including Lifelong Learning, Children's Services and Early Years and Childcare Development. The Social Exclusion Unit's recent report 'Bridging the Gap' identified the need to rationalise and reorganise the 'current fragmented patterns of professions and services' with responsibilities for 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training. Arguably reacting to the potential for duplication inherent in the plans, the government announced its intention to create 'a single new advice and support service, in charge of trying to steer young people aged between 13 and 19 through the system'. Although 'a universal service' is envisaged, it will 'give priority to those most at risk of underachievement and disaffection' (SEU 1999: Section 1.21). This is expanded in the potentially far-reaching Connexions strategy which includes establishing the 'new profession of Personal Adviser' (DfEE 2000a: 45). The 'new profession' will include existing youth workers, careers officers, college lecturers, school teachers and other staff working within the social professions who will receive training additional to their original vocational qualifications in order to put the policies into practice. Uniquely, this strategy also moves beyond the establishment of inter-disciplinary partnerships and manipulates professional genes to generate a new hybrid. The impact of the creation of a 'new profession' presents potentially interesting research material.

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[1] Thanks to David Smith , Comm. Ed. undergraduates and Calderdale New Start Project

Since New Labour became the UK's government, there has been a massive growth in partnerships as professional collaborations bringing together practitioners from different traditions and professional cultures. Community organisations tend to be conspicuous in their absence, having been 'consulted', often implicitly, during the consultation phases of policy formulation. For example, at national level, the proposals for Connexions contained in 'Bridging the Gap' 'solicited more than 380 written responses from practitioners and others; and over 600 people attended consultation events' (DfEE 2000b: 19). An impressive response is implied but the initiative will affect *all* young people, their parents / carers and people who work with them: a substantial part of the UK's population. The implementation of the policy is now the responsibility of professionals: communities have been 'consulted'.

Existing research tends to focus on those pre-1997 partnerships, often engaged in urban regeneration with an economic focus, which brought together the public and private sectors, community and voluntary organisations. The research often interrogates the apparent discourse of empowerment. Writing in the dying days of the Conservative government, Collins and Lister analysed tenants' experience of partnership where the rhetoric of 'participation', 'local control' and 'local people taking control back from bureaucrats and having a say in building a better future' masked the reality of 'securing the compliance of community organisations with an externally-imposed agenda' (Collins and Lister 1997: 38): partnerships to validate decisions. Questions concerning the forms of power inherent in the relationship and the pathologising nature of area-based approaches to tackling issues around deprivation and poverty are raised by commentators such as Player. Drawing on Gramsci, he argues that, 'one of the domestic instruments for securing consent is through the 'moral and intellectual suasion' of Partnership' (Player 1996: 49). The individuals and communities involved develop knowledge, skills and confidence: Collins and Lister, using Freire to help to explain the processes which took place, note how community activists learned about the nature of oppression and resistance (Collins and Lister 1997) but the economic transformation may be less apparent.

Q: Can partnerships work?
A: That's a matter of opinion.

It could be suggested that the increasing emphasis on inter-agency, inter-professional approaches is despite, rather than because of, documented experience. Parsons observes,

> *Numerous acts and official guidance documents over the years have urged collaboration between services. The constant need for reiteration reflects enduring concerns arising from experience, and much of the research conducted into inter-agency working, showing the apparent failure of such collaboration to work out in practice* (Parsons 1999:144).

Kendrick offers one example of such research, focussing on social workers' and schoolteachers' participation in inter-agency initiatives in Scotland. He suggests initial training for each fosters negative stereotyping of the others' profession. Whilst 'a high level or knowledge and skills' is required, the qualifying training for each provides 'limited opportunities to learn about the work of others' and possibly serves to 'reinforce mutual suspicion' (Kendrick 1995:137). This lack of knowledge and resultant tendency to engage in negative stereotyping has an impact on practitioners' capacity to co-operate effectively in practice. Professional imperialism results: professionals see their techniques as more effective, seek to spread their methods and quote research in support. Furthermore, varying structures within which the different potential partners are located also have an impact: the participating agencies and staff do not fit together comfortably.

Agencies and professionals' training are not the only roots of difficulty. Acknowledging that their findings are at odds with most research, which locates difficulties at structural level, Richards and Horder identify the personal commitment of participants as being of paramount significance in ensuring the success of partnerships. For them, emphasis on 'personal feelings, views and attitudes' matters more than 'professional and agency structures'. They analyse significant factors under four headings: the 'local champion' (the charismatic enthusiast whose commitment proves infectious), 'critical mass' (sufficient enthusiastic participants), sufficient time and mutual trust and 'liking' (Richards and Horder 1999:455). Similarly, Morgan and Hughes suggest that the formation of 'trusting relationships' is the key element in successful partnerships. They cite a New Start scheme where the Principal Youth Officer and Chief Executive were 'good friends' who encouraged socialising between their staff teams (Morgan and Hughes 1999: 7). These findings are interesting but potentially unsatisfactory for managers wanting to build successful partnerships rather than establish dating bureaux. Partnerships based on mutual warmth lack the potential for sustainability. Sustainability is vital since post-holders change. This points towards the need to identify structural approaches.

Q: What do partners say?
A: It's good to be friends.

Earlier this year, as an aspect of the commissioned evaluation of a New Start project, I undertook focussed interviews with members of the partnership, staff and young people. Partnerships were also the subject of in-class discussion during a youth and community work professional qualification course. The cohort comprised part-time in-service students and full-time students on placement with a wide range of agencies. The New Start partners were positive about both their involvement and the scheme itself. In comparison, the students produced anecdotal accounts of predominantly unsatisfactory experiences and observations. Although analysis of the New Start data has yet to be completed, themes are emerging. Data appear to reflect Richards and Horder's emphasis on the importance of inter-personal relationships rather than structural elements. Success tends to be attributed primarily to the commitment and inter-personal skills of the individuals involved, together with willingness to share information openly. Some interviewees suggested that their managers' choice of representatives for partnerships was important in ensuring success. Reflecting the findings of Richards and Horder, it was suggested that there were members of staff who were more, or less, likely to provide the enthusiasm, commitment and level of inter-personal skills required. This places managers in the position of being able to encourage the success or failure of partnerships through selection of participants and highlights their own levels of commitment to the process. 'Liking' and 'being good friends' seems to matter.

New Start partners mentioned the 'shared ethos' of their partnership as contributing to their success. This proved difficult to explore verbally and tended to be 'felt', reflecting Player's comment that the term 'partnership' tends to evoke 'uncritical feelings of warmth and belonging'(Player 1996: 47). In comparison, the students recounted stories of partnerships where participants' very different professional

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values and understandings generated discord. Considering the gulf between the New Start data and students' accounts suggested a model for analysing partnerships which could provide scope to explore further the 'recipe' for success: a transferable recipe which does not rely on a charismatic participant, personal friendships and the quality of the partners' inter-personal relationships .

Q: Is there a model for success?
A: The 'connected partnership' has potential.

In any inter-professional partnership there are several variables. These include the staff involved, their professional backgrounds, the management and culture of their organisation, the methods and activities which the project employs and the outcomes sought. Each agency has its own aims and objectives, agenda, ethos, organisational culture, values, knowledge and skills which underpin the nature of its commitment and involvement. Different combinations of variables give rise to different identifiable models. The client-as-object, target-focussed 'disconnected partnership' and the holistic, needs-led 'connected' client-centred partnership are considered here in the context of projects / practical, operational level work rather than at the strategic level of policy formulation. These models draw on elements additional to the inter-personal skills of those involved.

i) Disconnected partnerships

Disconnected partnerships involve agreement between partners on the nature of the work but difference in the emphasis which each puts on the particular aims, objectives and outcomes sought. This model brings together professionals for activities which have the capacity to meet each of their differing requirements. These may have been collaboratively generated and unanimously agreed, but their significance, and even the understanding of them, differs between partners. Kendrick looks at a partnership, the development of which was

> *punctuated by different perspectives and expectations, so that there has not always been total consensus on the direction it was to take... The roles of the principal agencies involved in the strategy are different in relation to the [different] aspects and this has resulted in differing levels of commitment to different aspects of the strategy* (Kendrick 1995: 142).

There may also be difference in the interpretations of the reasons underpinning various activities. The partnership involved in a project, such as New Start, aiming to reach young people not in education, employment or training could involve youth workers, careers officers, FE college staff, youth offending team staff, police and workers from voluntary organisations. The partners' individual and organisational interpretations of the thinking behind the work may be expressed in similar phrases but build on different underpinning understandings of the purposes enshrined in their own targets, from the reduction in teenage pregnancy or youth offending to participation in education. In such an instance, partners all see the initiative as having the potential to meet their own priority outcomes. However, the outcomes they emphasise differ. They are not necessarily contradictory but may involve concentrating on one outcome at the expense of others. Indeed, the partners may be competing to achieve their prioritised outcomes. The 'disconnected' partnership may foster a project which meets the aims of each of the partners. However, the partnership primarily will be serving the needs of the partners. The clientele of the project become the raw material contributing to performance targets: objects rather than subjects. The varying emphases result in particular significance being accorded to different pieces of information and to different outcomes to the extent that success is measured in differing ways. In terms of providing agencies with positive outcomes for their designated targets, some disconnected partnerships may well be held to have succeeded by partner agencies, especially where measured outcomes are primarily quantitative. The 'objects' may also identify individual successes, depending on their own personal needs and aspirations.

In addition to operational level, aspects of the disconnected partnership are located at the interface between the structures and philosophies of the partners' professions. This results in variance in the identification of the precise nature of the issue(s) the partnership's work is intended to address. The varying epistemological approaches on which the different professions are constructed are rooted in the different interpretations or ontological perceptions of 'reality' and reinforced through the training and education provided for each professional area. Different professions emphasise formal and informal education, group and personal development, welfare or control and their characteristic techniques reflect these interpretations of appropriate responses to situations and issues. Responses are constructed on differently formulated discourses of power, informed by understandings of 'empowerment', 'involvement', 'consent' and, inevitably, 'inclusion'. Partners may lack the opportunity to engage in such fundamental debates: the pragmatic demands of the work take priority.

ii) Connected partnerships

The alternative, 'client-centred' partnership prioritises outcomes which focus on the project participants themselves, as opposed to the partners. This places the individuals, groups and communities themselves in the 'subject' position. For example, the primary aims for the partnership of a project involving meeting the needs of young people not in education, training or employment would be the young people. The nature of the needs, the resultant aims, objectives and outcomes identified focus on the participants and are identified by the participants, employing the skills of the professionals to draw them out rather than being framed primarily in terms of the outcomes sought by participant agencies. The professionals contribute from their diverse perspectives, drawing on their different ways of working to meet the same outcomes. In the first instance, outcomes are measured in terms of the needs identified by the young people and the outcomes they have achieved. Secondary outcomes are likely to meet the range of priorities identified by members of the partnership: where young people have grown in self-confidence, engaged in a range of activities and moved away from hitherto chaotic lifestyles, they will be more likely to be able to secure and sustain education, training or employment, less likely to become involved in criminal activity and more likely to be in a position to engage in a healthier lifestyle. If the young people are paramount, sharing information becomes the partnership's norm in order to ensure that the primary outcome is achieved.

Within a partnership where the subjects themselves are the primary focus, partners tend to frame their explanations of the success in terms of their fellow partners' interpersonal skills and the fact that they 'worked well together'. However, for organisations seeking to replicate the approach, consideration of underlying factors and pointers for devising appropriate training are appropriate. The 'connected' or client-centred approach offers potential within a specific, professionally formulated paradigm.

Q: What do we take for granted?
A: It's common sense.

Unpicking the phrase 'shared ethos' and comments like 'we worked well together' provides further material for consideration. The holistic approach to partnership can be fostered by participants' ability to 'name' their value base and the philosophical approaches underpinning their profession and to acknowledge the value of alternatives. The practical nature of many forms of training and the emphasis on competencies at the expense of competence has restricted the opportunity for aspiring professionals to develop understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of their own approaches and consequently their capacity to acknowledge different ontological perceptions. Whilst theorists are constructing bases for the social professions, potential practitioners are pointed towards practical aspects of the work. Good interpersonal skills and 'liking' may assist individuals in transcending this but the role of ontological and epistemological knowledge are of unexplored, hence unexploited, significance in securing successful interprofessional partnerships.

For experienced professionals, whose internalised reflective practice has become intuitive, collaboration highlights the 'taken for granted'; 'the way in which members of a particular cultural group become so immersed in its patterns, assumptions and values that they do not even notice they are there'(Thompson 1998:15)]. In the context of partnerships, 'cultural group' may be identified as professional cultural grouping. Thompson explains how intuitive practice has positive and negative aspects. Positively, 'it contributes to 'ontological security', a sense of rootedness and psychological integration – an important element of mental well-being'(Thompson 1998:15). Ontological security involves knowing, instinctively, the basic frameworks of one's societal, professional and cultural context. However, negatively, it presents potential for prejudices as it 'refers to the tendency to see the world from within the narrow confines of one culture, to project one set of norms and values on to other groups of people' (Thompson 1998:16). This can be translated into professionalised forms of relativism and the belief that one is inherently more valuable, significant or likely to succeed. The projection of norms and values involves the use of one's own frameworks. This leads to mis-comprehension or failure to comprehend other professional paradigms. Thus excessive ontological security, taken to its extreme, produces professional, social and cultural myopia and reinforces mutual suspicions: professional imperialism. Thompson draws a continuum, stretching from 'excessive reliance on security, producing defensiveness and rigidity' to 'insufficient security, producing anxiety and low levels of coping skills' with a central, balanced point: 'a "healthy" balance of ontological security, neither too rigid nor too insecure' (Thompson 1998:32). Ontological security remains 'taken for granted' but, for people in social professions, an awareness of the constituent parts of their security forms an aspect of reflexivity. Collaborating with other professionals presents the opportunity for reflexivity: confronted by new perspectives, elements of the practitioner's own 'taken for granted' practice are highlighted and opened for interrogation. The 'naming' of the constituent aspects of one's professional ontology provides a step towards ontological awareness.

Investigating the relevance and effect of partnership approaches is emphasised when the professional is confronted by new perspectives from which they are better positioned to interrogate their own context. Ontological awareness, or the capacity to identify the component parts of the previously taken for granted, is fostered. To be able to identify, reflect on, 'name' and explain the components of one's professional cultural security is to achieve a degree of ontological awareness which is potentially significant in the development of successful partnerships.

Q: Where does that leave us?
A: Looking beyond warmth and charisma.

There is value in exploring the territory beyond hitherto compartmentalised professions and using inter-disciplinary partnerships to address intractable social problems. Such expeditions benefit from the provision of research. Questions abound: are bilateral or multi-agency deals more effective? Are there ways to foster ontological awareness? What training would facilitate inter-disciplinary work? Can structures be designed which lessen the significance of 'liking'? How can professionals work together effectively? Some practitioners doubt the wisdom of the approach and criticise those who are seen as accepting such hegemony without question but the scale of policies, almost all enacted since 1997, designed to be implemented through partnerships requires a response. Engaging with the potential synergy generated by inter-professional work and examining ways to build positive outcomes as well as avoiding duplication and lack of co-ordination suggest a logic which goes beyond common sense. The positive possibilities presented by the encounter with professional difference and otherness have yet to be fully identified whilst the scope for conflict has been noted. Existing approaches have not succeeded in achieving inclusion but some pilot projects have revealed ideas from which larger scale programmes may learn. Research has the scope to identify how to ensure initiatives are not undermined by professional conflicts but provide the opportunity for innovation and creativity.

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Crossing the border of education

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Introduction

In recent years, the notion of adult education has become more widespread in Taiwan. *Life-long learning* has become a slogan which educators are using very frequently. This has resulted in different initiates both by the government and educators which still have very little to do with those activities and learning processes which adult education fails to take into account. Elsey (1986, p.7) suggests that 'adult education embraces a wide range of learning activities and processes'. The issue here, therefore, is to consider whether overseas study can be regarded as a learning process and whether or not it can affect one's social and cultural adaptation. They are the focus of this paper.

The earliest historical records of overseas study for academic purposes are found in the time of the Roman Republic when people went to Greece to study literature, philosophy and arts. In the East, examples of overseas study can also be found in the history of China in Confucius's time, for instance. When reading the literature which mentions overseas study in the past, it is apparent that overseas study has been primarily used in adult education to illustrate and reinforce academic knowledge. However, the impacts of overseas study on one's social and cultural adaptation are seldom examined.

For example, at one time overseas study was very popular in China, especially at the end of the Ching Dynasty period when China lost a lot of battles against western countries. China sent a great deal of students, a lot of whom were still in their adolescence, to learn about western economies, military systems and politics. It was very unfortunate that most of these overseas study schemes failed due to a lack of long-term planning and efficient management (Lin, 1976). Lin (1976, p.595) also suggested that overseas study continued into the twentieth century, based on the existing experience, after the Ching dynasty collapsed, and he listed a few defects:

1. The policy for overseas study should have been a long-term scheme and organised as such.
2. There was too great a tendency towards students going to America.
3. The emphasis was placed too much on the degree itself rather than the knowledge.
4. The return of the students was too low.

Since then, the number of students who go abroad to study has increased. There are debates about the 'positive and negative effects' which overseas study can offer. As noted above, Lin argues that there should be a long-term overseas study scheme or planning in accordance with the policy of the country. However, this could be difficult at the present time. While a lot of Taiwanese students do not need financial support from the government, their wealthy families have provided them with the chance of a 'liberal education'.

When students cross the border to an unknown destination in order to pursue their further education, apart from their academic achievement, this learning about a foreign culture and way of life can be an enormous task which can possibly affect the students' social and cultural adaptation. One's social and cultural adaptation is more like a cultural education, and it plays an influential role on the success of the students' studies; as Erikson (1982) notes, everyone's personality development is constantly changing as one's living environment changes. Jones indicates:

The beliefs and value systems, the forms of expression and traditions which allow us to describe a particular culture are transmitted in both formal and informal ways. Many of the assumptions on which a particular culture is founded are picked up almost unconsciously by living and growing up in a particular society. (1986, p.22)

Often we hear: 'If I knew the culture a little bit more, I would have enjoyed my stay better' or 'If only I had the chance to do it again.' Students seem to suffer a great deal in terms of social and cultural maladjustment when they go to a foreign country to study. A few dialogues adapted from the author's research on the overseas study tour may demonstrate the above statement:

Very often I felt foolish because I could not react or respond to the present situations as I could in my own language. It took a long while to get accustomed to situations like that. (1999, p.193)

I am disappointed. It was very different from what I have dreamt about England. (1999, p.190)

My bag got stolen in the coach. I was so angry and upset. But I did not know how to show my anger in English. I really wanted to swear. (1999, p.198)

Students found out that they did not make the best of the precious opportunity while studying abroad because of being unable to get used to or to adapt to the other culture. The psychological barrier, of not being able to adapt to the foreign culture, may result in failure academically. The reasons why the students cannot adapt to the new culture have a lot to do with the problems with the preparation taken before going abroad. Although guidance and instructions are provided before going abroad, the conclusion of the author's (1999) research on overseas study tours is that there is still a lot to be desired in terms of pre-tour preparation.

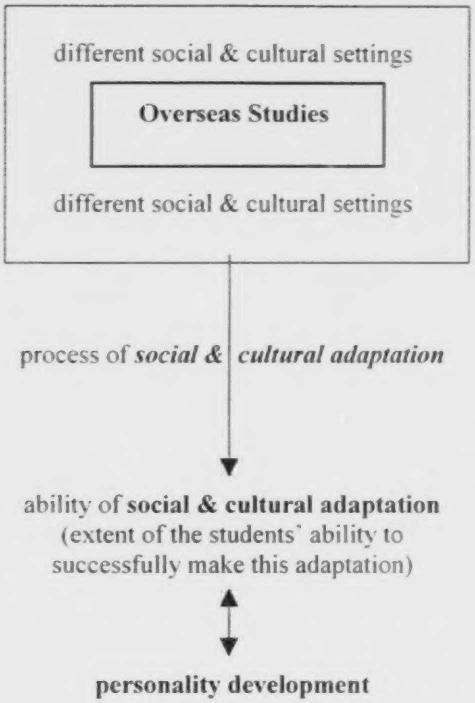
A project, sponsored by Taiwan's National Science Council, has been conducted since December 1999, which attempts to find out how overseas study could affect Taiwanese students' personality development. While conducting this research, it was found that when students were in a cross-cultural living, they faced a great deal of interchange or conflict of ideas, the transferral of knowledge and social and cultural adaptation. Among these challenges, social and cultural adaptation seem to take priority over the others.

What is social and cultural adaptation?

Social and cultural adaptation implies one's degree of acculturation or acceptance to another culture and its way of life. Students, when they do their master's degree or doctoral degree, are normally at an age of between 23-45. They may possess a distinctly Chinese world view and so find it difficult to become familiar with other customs and values. For instance, a lot of Chinese who emigrated to USA have suffered a lot, in terms of social and cultural adaptation, from being unable to mingle or to be recognised. The migration process is still a fresh example of such adaptation and integration of the 'old' and the 'new' and is still ongoing (Huang & Ying, 1990).

Therefore, in this paper, the aim is to consider one's social and cultural adaptations when studying abroad and to determine how overseas study, as a learning process, can affect one's social and cultural adaptation.

The diagram on the next page may explain the above statement:


different social & cultural settings
Overseas Studies
different social & cultural settings
process of *social & cultural adaptation*
ability of **social & cultural adaptation**
(extent of the students' ability to successfully make this adaptation)
personality development

This paper has offered a few headings regarding social and cultural adaptation for Taiwanese students:

1. Language problem.
It was found in many surveys that a lot of Taiwanese students suffered from the language problem. Although Taiwanese students generally have a higher proficiency in English reading and writing, their abilities in speaking and listening are still relatively poor.

2. Confucian philosophy.
Students from Taiwan generally have a Confucian philosophy which dictates a sense of order and a prescription for the role relationships within Chinese society. For example, they will not confront or have doubts on whatever teachers say because teachers are like their fathers and are symbols of authority.

3. Pattern of communication.
The pattern of communication can be a decisive factor for the students' social and adaptations. Taiwanese students' way of communication can sometimes be very indirect. A lot of misunderstanding are caused because of the differences of the pattern of communication.

4. Shame and 'face'.
This could be a serious problem for students from the background of a Confucian philosophy. As Shon and Ja suggest:

Shame and loss of face are similarly guiding principles of behavior and powerful motivating forces for conforming to societal or familial expectations. (Shon & Ja, 1982)

5. Expectations about the culture.
One's expectation about the foreign culture is crucial for one's social and cultural adaptation. Knowing what the foreign culture will be like can prepare students psychologically.

6. Attitude towards oneself.
This category indicates one's feelings about oneself; one's stability in terms of self-identification, self-esteem, and sense of competence. One's perception about a foreign culture depends a lot on one's encounters and experience within the cultural context. As Jones suggests:

The knowledge that perceptual systems can be improved through exercise and practice is important for educators. (1986, p.68)

Hence, one's social and cultural adaptation can be improved by everyday contact with the culture, either painfully by learning from mistakes, or joyfully, by obtaining knowledge from practice.

"Sometimes, I wondered why my foreign friends did not speak to me or looked at me in a strange way. I realised that I had said something terrible." (Tsay, 1999, p.198)

"I did not have any idea where to go if I were alone. At least I had some companions who could not speak good English either." (Tsay, 1999, p.197)

"I feel that I am more optimistic after the tour. There are a lot of ways of solving problems. If this cannot work, try other ways." (Tsay, 1999, p.194)

Is social and cultural adaptation a part of adult education?

Adult educators should allow a much broader view of education and learning than is often the case in writing and reading on the subject. Many adult educators have offered different definitions of the term 'adult education': Legge (1982), Groombridge (1982), Rogers (1986), Elsey (1986), Long (1987), Liveright and Haygood (1968) have all defined it in their own way. Jarvis (1983) implies that adult education is associated with the idea of liberal education. Jarvis states that:

> *The term 'adult education' carries specific connotations in the United Kingdom which implies that it is specifically liberal education, and this also has a stereotype of being a middle-class, leisure time pursuit. Underlying this implication is the idea that the adult's education has been completed and during leisure time, the adult self-indulgently improves or broadens existing knowledge, skills or hobbies.* (1995, p.20)

Jarvis (1983) believes that adult education should aspire to being liberal education. Jones (1986, p.144) indicates that the term 'adult education' is usually reserved for adult learning which is organised by some agency or other. Rogers identifies different types of agencies which provide adult education activities. He categorises adult education into three sectors:

- *formal - courses and classes run by schools, colleges, universities and other statutory and non-**statutory** agencies making up the educational system;*
- 'extra-formal' - courses and classes run by formal agencies outside the educational system, e.g. government departments, industrial training agencies, trade unions and commercial concerns;
- *non-formal - educational activities provided by voluntary agencies and informal groups.* (1986, p.xii-xiii)

A debating point emerges here, in that one's social and cultural adaptation is not normally organised by agents and often takes place unexpectedly. For example, students will have different cultural experiences between buying food from a local market and going to an opera or play. One might argue: 'Adult learning can take place in a whole variety of settings,' and, 'Do all these settings actually require an agent?' Gibson (1986) suggests that learning is not merely a cognitive activity and it should be the process and outcome of cultural activity which can be found in all aspects of one's mind, feeling and body.

> *Learning for Bourdieu, thus becomes far more than merely a cognitive activity. As the process and outcome of cultural activity, it is deeply embedded in all aspects of an individual's being; mind, feeling and body.* (1986, p.57)

Gibson (1986, p.12) also indicates that by enabling individuals to become aware of the conflicting interests which shape their understanding and their lives, this can enlighten critical theory. A critical approach will allow an examination of how a concept of one's personality development during one's studying abroad is socially and culturally determined.

Rogers categorises three characteristics of personality development: full development, perspective and autonomy, to mark off the adult from the non-adult in almost all societies (1994, p.7). These three characteristics can be the ideal aim of adult education which illustrate the idea of overseas study. He suggests that the students:

- *should seek to promote personal growth, the full exploitation of the talents of the individual;*
- *should seek to encourage the development of a sense of perspective;*
- *should seek to foster confidence, the power of choice and action, to increase responsibility rather than to deny it. (1994, p.7)*

Dewey's points cohere with Rogers's view. He makes his points by saying:

> *Since life means growth, a living creature lives as truly and positively at one stage as at another, with the same intrinsic fullness and the same absolute claims. Hence education means the enterprise of supplying the conditions which ensure growth, or adequacy of life, irrespective of age.* (Dewey, 1916, p.51)

Many educators have shared the same view that personal growth can be learned and developed by the cultural context that one is within. Personal growth here can include one's social and cultural adaptation.

The following dialogues reflect that one's social and cultural adaptations could influence one's personality development and are the processes of adult learning. The ideas of adult education cover a great range of activities in which adult learners engage, in order to facilitate, improve or broaden their existing knowledge, skills or abilities. One's social and cultural adaptation therefore should be included within the bounds of adult education.

I feel that I have become more independent and my attitude towards things is more objective. This is the growth that I expected to have before I came. (Tsay, 1999, p.194)

I think that I am able to take care of myself better. (Tsay, 1999, p.194)

Conclusion

In the author's *The Role of the Study Tour in Cultural studies in Adult Education in Taiwan* (1999), the suggestion is put forward that:

> *...the 'opportunities to make contact with a foreign culture' was more dependent on the 'arrangement of the social and cultural activities of the study tour', rather than on the duration.* (1999, p. 286)

This implies that students' social and cultural encounters will depend more on the way they live their life abroad rather than on the length of the stay. Unlike those in the study tour, the students who are on their long-term overseas studies have to arrange and be responsible for their encounters—whether or not they can adapt to the new culture and way of life. Adult educators are therefore to facilitate the students' leaning both academically and culturally. Jones's view coincides with the intention of this paper. He (1986, p.135) implies that adult education has a central role to play in the maintenance or development of culture. He suggests:

> *Adult educators are in a position to help adult students to enrich both their own lives and the culture in which they live and work.* (1988, Preface)

A clear pathway that leads to enriching one's life and the culture has not yet been analysed. Education should not be seen as being solely about the acquisition of knowledge. Rather than a piece of knowledge, education should be more like a realisation of human life and culture which one is within. With as open a mind as possible when going to a foreign country, one should also put importance on the pre-tour preparation, not only in the subject studied but more crucially in the culture that one will be in.

Jerome Bruner (1996) has once clarified the relationship between culture, mind and education. He feels that one's learning and thinking are always situated in cultural settings and always depend on the use of cultural resources.

> *Culture, then, though itself man-made, both forms and makes possible the workings of a distinctively human mind. On this view, learning and thinking are always situated in a cultural setting and always depend on the utilization of cultural resources.* (1996, p.4)

D. J. Jones has over the years striven to introduce the arts into adult education, as he regards them as cultural activities. Engaging oneself with the arts should help one's understanding of the foreign culture and furthermore improve one's social and cultural adaptation.

Raymond Williams (1983) once suggested that 'culture' is one of the most difficult words to define. First hand experience, provided by the overseas study, is a discovery of an old way transformed for the needs of the approaching twenty-first century, from a textbook narrative to a real-cultural-experience narrative.

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Collaboration and identity - time to accept the reality?

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Introduction

Charged with the responsibility for developing a curriculum for refugees, a traditionally excluded learning community, this paper reflects on the approach adopted by a newly qualified adult educator. The little work that exists on similar developments highlighted the need for consultation (Preece and Bokhari, 19991) and negotiation (Merton, 1997) with the participants from this specific learning community. Combined with a wish not to assume the role of an educational expert and create a division between those creating knowledge and those using it, a collaborative learning approach was developed. To gain an understanding of this collaborative process the programme is examined in relation to the values held by the participants, elements of partnership, the role of trust and how much equity can be achieved. Kraus (1980), echoing the work of Dewey (1938), has argued that collaboration is successful when the individuals involved are 'aware of themselves'. Examining this emphasises the impact such a process has on the identity of those participating. This paper looks at the effect on the identity of those involved through participation in a collaborative learning approach, and most especially at the educator. As he was clearly involved in learning himself this allows a focus to be made on the dialectic of educator versus self identity and the impact of the overall group identity upon those participating in this collaborative learning. Drawing together the effect of a collaborative learning process on the identity of an educator enables a brief examination about learning in this context. In an era of increased discourses relating to widening educational opportunities and inclusive learning, this experience questions how far university structures and cultures are synonymous with specific learning communities.

The programme

The curriculum was developed for a group of twenty participants drawn from refugee communities across London. The resultant group comprised those from Europe (such as Bosnia), the Middle East (Iran) and Africa (Togo). The programme was aimed at assisting refugees to help their own communities by developing their advice and guidance skills. The broad curriculum areas were: advice and guidance skills; the labour market; education and training; resource development; and refugee issues, such as immigration law. Although run by the University of Surrey, the course ran at a community college in London for one day per week for twenty-six weeks and included the development of an individual sub-project. This extended beyond this period, with the aim of becoming sustainable at the end of the year long programme.

On researching curriculum development and design for such a specific learning community, it became evident that there was no blueprint to follow. The result was a decision to develop a collaborative approach, drawing on skills held within the group itself and when necessary educators from outside.

Collaboration

Dewey has argued that to improve and develop as a learner we need to be open and look to resolve issues and problems. According to Clift et al (1995), this means that the expertise and the skill of the educator is not in the storing of knowledge, but rather in synthesising alternative solutions in order to transform the status quo. As a result, an individual may prove to be more knowledgeable in a certain situation than another. The intention was to acknowledge this and use it as a basis for the collaborative model. Although studies have shown that there is an association between the quality of the learner/educator relationship and the value of learning as perceived by the learner, the collaborative approach suggests a more equitable model. During the development of the curriculum, and the delivery of the course, there would be recognition that the educator and the learners were constructing knowledge together. Whilst it has been argued that collaboration supports and reinforces the development of the individual and their contributions, it can also help to organise groups. The programme intended to provide the opportunity to test this. All those involved would be able to use their 'expertise' for the good of the group.

'Collaboration does not just happen' as Clift et al argue, 'it requires considerable effort to begin and even more to maintain.' Wallace (1998) agrees when he claims that for collaboration to be effective there are two essential elements. First, a substantial amount of energy and effort to coordinate the negotiation between the participants and secondly, an ability to put forward counter arguments to focus energy on. The experience of running this programme suggests, however, that there are four key aspects, each complex, which create the potential for Wallace's two elements to be successful. These are the values held by the individuals involved in the collaboration, creating partnership beyond participation, the level of trust created and the equity between the learners and the educators.

Values

Our behaviour is regulated by a set of values held by each of us. These values influence our behaviour and therefore affect our development. For the collaborative approach to be effective there needs to be recognition of these values. For such a culturally diverse group of people these values were expected to cover a wide spectrum, some complementary, others not. Although this may seem to present the educator with difficulty, on reflection it did not. It helped provide the counter arguments Wallace believed are necessary for successful collaboration. The group acknowledged the different values and the diversity created and whilst they were clearly analysed and often stimulated heated debate, these were respected and welcomed. Acknowledging this, as an educator, was important for the collaboration to work effectively and allow the participants to become more aware of themselves. In cases where the differences between the learners are less apparent, the question for educators in a collaborative approach must be how to acknowledge that these differences still exist.

The individual's values, and their recognition by those involved in the collaborative process, affect the level of participation and development of partnership.

Partnership and participation

Attached to the values brought were goals and these were not necessarily shared amongst the group. However, as long as these were not contradictory they did not need to be abandoned. Often separate goals could be accomplished without inconvenience to others. The negotiation was made easier as the refugees themselves shared concerns, such as "survival", and the mutual experiences helped to reduce and avoid competition inside the group. Incorporating the individual goals, and therefore the values held, through negotiation, produced a partnership with agreed project outcomes.

Although as Gallacher (Macbeth et al, 1995) argues, partnership can be used in many ways and can lack precision in meaning, the high level of participation in this programme enabled a clear understanding to develop. The collaborative nature of the work allowed people to be involved to a greater or lesser extent depending on the negotiation that was undertaken. The partnership created emphasised cooperation and the educator attempted to ensure that a hierarchy was not created. By blurring the boundaries between views by discussion and negotiation, the cooperation became positive, allowing many individual values to be incorporated as part of the larger endeavour. A key to this was effective communication, which was an aspect concentrated on initially as a result of a concern, on behalf of the educator, that the working language of the programme, English, was the second language of many of those involved. Whilst this concern proved unfounded, as the participants had highly developed communication skills, emphasis on clarity from the outset of the work assisted in the development of the partnership.

Wallace believed that a great deal of energy and effort is required for collaboration to be effective. The development of the partnership began to provide this. It also allowed the participants to begin to believe in the larger group that was evolving and for mutual trust to be developed.

Trust

For an effective partnership to be developed and for negotiation to be undertaken in which all people bring and are willing to put forward their own values and goals, then mutual trust is required. The more people involved in a partnership, the more complex the relationships involved become. As a learning community, combining a great deal of diverse values and experiences, the development of the trust necessary to allow the collaboration to be successful took time. The recent experiences that this group of learners had undergone meant that trusting others was not something to be taken lightly. They appeared at the programme outset to justify Giddens' view (1998), reflecting on the work of Jordan, that incapacity and lack of empowerment felt by people is linked with their image of themselves. By developing work on their own, then with a partner and then small groups, the participants began to develop trust and friendship. As the group began to work together it became clear that they were working off one another and they appeared to grow in confidence. In reflections at the end of the programme, this was an area highlighted frequently by the participants, as an important element. Growing confidence was complemented by greater openness and honesty and an increased level of trust which enabled the partnership to develop beyond mere participation if and when individuals wished. Maintaining this for the length of the programme took time and effort, but was recognised as important for the collaborative process to remain effective. As confidence grew, however, it brought with it questions of influence and power within the collaborative approach, which threatened the success of the work.

Equity

If Kraus (1980) is correct, then there is a problem for the educator in developing a collaborative approach because he argues that such a venture is based upon shared power and authority, and has a non-hierarchical approach. In most cases in education power is not equally shared between the educator and the learner. Acknowledging that power could not be absent, the attempt in this collaborative learning approach was for it to be shared between individuals, to enable collective decisions to be arrived at. The power was held in the partnership between all those contributing, based on the knowledge and expertise within each individual. Inevitably the power shifted within each element of the cooperation as people negotiated from their own expertise or knowledge. At the beginning of the programme the balance was always likely to shift towards the educator. This was partly explained when it became clear that this specific learning community had a high regard for education and for educators. This potentially allowed the educator to rely on the traditional power and authority of the position and use this when negotiation became drawn out and difficulties occurred and yet collaboration required that this was not utilised. As the individuals became more aware of themselves, however, and confident in the partnership, they became less likely to allow this to occur and so the important elements of collaboration were able to become established.

Keys to collaboration

On reflection it was important to the collaborative approach that the educator was seen as part of the learning community, with as much invested and his values understood and acknowledged. Allowing participants to be able to withdraw for a brief period of time and then rejoin without difficulty was also a necessary element and made it easier to renew the commitment, and recognise the participation, of those involved at regular opportunities.

Although this took time and energy, the intention of the programme was to use a collaborative learning experience to allow a diverse group of learners to construct by talking together and reaching agreement (Bruffee, 1993). Undertaking this, in retrospect, was testing Dewey's ideal of education, the "power of self control". The time and energy Wallace highlighted as necessary for creating successful collaboration was required to allow individual values to be discussed and understood. During this process, individuals began to invest trust and authority within other members of the group. This then extended to smaller groups within the larger group, as the participation led to partnership. Finally, this trust extended to individuals themselves, gaining confidence and placing their own values within the values of the larger learning community. By steadily increasing the size of the groups working on issues, and regularly changing the membership of these, such developments were witnessed. The collaborative learning environment appeared to be achieving the project aims. However, the development of this process challenged the values people held and developed partnerships with people holding vastly different ones. This led to questions being asked about the effect that this process was having on the identity of the individuals involved, and particularly the educator.

Identity

The uniqueness that differentiates us from one another has occupied many people and as a result a variety of terms have been coined. Whether we call it identity, the self, personality or character, people have tried to explain that individuals have something that is unique. Kelly (1963) reflects that a group of events create the self and make that self an individual. By understanding this self we may be able to explain why things happen. This desire to predict behaviour appears to motivate the study of identity (Breakwell, 1983) and yet it is an extremely complex process. The result is a great deal of debate but what is of particular interest to this paper is the relationship between the formation of an identity and the notion that being labeled an educator may influence these 'events' and subsequently the identity of the self. We need to know, therefore, what makes an identity and what influence undertaking a specific role, that of an educator, has upon this. Finally, as this was a collaborative process we need to consider the influence that the group may have had.

Self identity

Self identity, according to Harre (1998), is to have a sense of 'one's own point of view, at any moment a location in space from which one perceives and acts upon the world.' The self is, according to Harre, the collected attributes of a person and as a result can include that of a particular occupation. However, the development of the self has to be seen in the context of a person's entire lifespan and does not begin or finish at a certain point in time.

Breakwell (1986) suggests that these collected attributes, which create the individuality of a person, are developed from the social and personal identity of each individual. The social identity is derived from group membership, the social position held, and status, while the personal identity is free from role or relationship determinants. Although these can be separated at a given time and experienced as different for the individual, they can appear to be merely different points in this process of development. In this collaborative process the social identity could be seen to be derived from being an educator and also from the position within this learning community. Personal identity would appear to more closely linked with experiences and values, which could also be derived from being part of a social group or holding certain status. Hence the difficulty Breakwell identifies in separating the two. The opportunity for a newly qualified educator was to examine this identity, and understand the influence of this social identity on the personal and vice versa. It is the influence the role has on the self identity which we need to examine next.

Educator identity

According to Biddle (1979) specific roles can create an identity. Given that educators undertake certain common actions the suggestion can be made that there are a common set of values attached to the role, which could lead to a loose common identity. Harre points out that in much recent writing a person's identity has been classified as being allied to the group, class or type that they belong to and not as a unique person. Whilst this may appear to be a realistic assumption, the development of an identity, as argued by Breakwell (1983 & 1986), suggests the process is more complex than this.

Action research undertaken by Day (1998) found that the identity of an educator was very much affected by the personal and ideological selves of the individual. The recognition of these multiple selves enables the educator to understand the process of learning more. This is an important point and recognises that there are different selves that make our identity, and being an educator is only one of these. Whilst the social identity is influenced by group membership, such as being an 'educator', the personal identity, as Day suggests, has other aspects to it. Although, it is difficult to understand how the personal identity is not influenced by the social identity, which could be shared by a number of people, clearly the identity of an individual can not be explained by social identity alone. Our personal identities do need to be acknowledged and interpreted for the identity of an educator to be given meaning. This acknowledges the need for professional learning to be an interactive process, as the identity is developed from the experience of different selves. It also acknowledges that educators are themselves learners and not just there to assist others in this process. The collaborative process also created a group identity.

Group identity

Kelly argued that the self is developed in relation to other people and the controls an individual feels as a result of this contact. When we are in contact our behaviour is affected. As a result, much of our social life is controlled by this group interaction and we need to acknowledge the impact of this particular group on the identity of each other as learners.

The substance and structure of a group's identity will be determined by a variety of factors: size; timespan; membership; status within; boundaries; communication; goals; histories and cultural beliefs. As the partnership developed within this collaborative approach, so this had an impact on the social, and subsequently personal identities, of the participants. Individuals were constantly challenged and never static, moving from group membership to group membership. As refugees they moved from their own community group, to the collaborative learning community and back again. Each of these groups has an impact on the self. The educator found himself working away from the central campus and the common structures, values and supports. As a result, the educator found that the individuals involved had a greater influence on his identity.

The identity of the participants was clearly influenced and developed as a result of the interaction that resulted from this collaborative approach. From this we can draw elements that clearly are unique to the self and result from personal values and are based on personal experiences. There are also social aspects that result from the membership of this particular group. For the educator in this programme, the group that had most impact was not a set of other educators, but the other participants.

In terms of project outcomes, collaboration had been a success, and it had also had an impact upon the identity of those involved. For the educator the impact was as a result of working with a specific group who were not within the mainstream, and also working with them away from the university campus. The educator found himself questioning his identity as a result and considering whether or not the common values that would be ascribed to the role of educator enable those working in education to react in a positive and flexible manner to respond to the challenges of specific learning communities and widening participation.

Conclusions - Learning in context

Collaboration was a difficult process and not one that appears to be currently embedded in the culture of the majority of educational enterprises. The key to success was commitment, energy and the acknowledgment of the coming together and the drawing apart. Kraus, drawing on work by Morris and Twist, argues that a set of values must be part of an organisation to enable collaboration to succeed. The first are the cultural values, which are primarily held by individuals. The second are the operative organisational philosophies, which are values held by the organisation and witnessed within the structures and processes that are developed as a result. In the collaborative approach adopted, the former became the main focus, with the values of individuals as the key to success. The identity of each individual was recognised and the process acknowledged change and was flexible. Difficulties occur when the second set of values impinges on the former. These organisational values are less flexible and can categorise and stereotype learners. They can see learners as static, belonging to social groups and therefore sharing identities. As a result, educational establishments provide learning environments that reflect such a linear view. For those that do not fit this model the clash between the structural demands and personal identity is likely to become obvious, as Breakwell identified. For those outside the mainstream the option is to adapt or remain marginalised. The challenge for educators is to re-evaluate their identity and redress the balance. One way of achieving this appears to be through collaboration.

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Adult educators in higher education; the paradox of inclusion

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The changing context

Where does adult education stop and higher education begin? Until the end of the last century, it was assumed that adult education was for adults, whilst higher education was for young people. However, in the new century, adult and higher education are much less clearly divided than they were. British higher education institutions are increasingly populated by students from precisely those groups where adult education focused its inclusive efforts in the past. Adults are very much part of the demography of university students.

The removal of the binary divide (between universities and polytechnics) in 1992 served to call into question the very existence of 'adult education' as a specialism, when so many mainstream students in the ex-polytechnics were adults. The efforts of adult educators for the past thirty years to open up higher education for their students would certainly seem to have borne fruit; adults (those over 21 on undergraduate courses, and over 25 on postgraduate) now constitute the majority of the student population (DfEE, 2000). 'Widening participation' and 'inclusion' have succeeded 'access' as the popular label for initiatives encouraging and enabling people from under-represented social groups to enter higher education. And adult students are so much part of the 'mainstream', that there is a national debate about the need to assess separately the quality of continuing education, the traditional home for many adult students. So we, as adult educators, can consider the access movement to have been successful - or can we?

When adult students were consigned to the 'access' constituency, they were taught by adult educators, who often brought with them the particular perspectives of adult education's intellectual, pedagogic and ideological history. Once those students are 'included' in the mainstream, who teaches them, and what perspectives inform the pedagogic practices to which they have gained access? It is our contention that whilst 'adult education' students have colonised, or been embraced by, the universities, adult educators and their theories have generally remained on the margins. If this is the case, it has serious implications for the inclusivity of higher education.

Pedagogy in higher education

It is ironic that this influx of adults into the universities should have occurred precisely at the moment when teaching and learning in higher education has become a policy focus and the object of significant institutional concern and action. The proliferation of teaching and learning courses, texts and initiatives for higher education teachers, and the establishment of the Institute for Learning and Teaching, might have been expected to provide an excellent niche for the decades of work which adult educators have put in to developing appropriate curricula and pedagogies for 'non-traditional' students. The pedagogic focus of adult education was, after all, on how to adapt and transform traditional teaching practices and the content of courses to include students for whom the standard cultural capital of universities was opaque and alienating.

In the United States and Australasia (for example) adult educators have colonised universities along with their students, and have made a major contribution to changing content, structure and practices in a more inclusionary direction; the preoccupations of adult educators – as well as their students - have, in effect, become mainstream. In Britain, the response to new student constituencies has been different. The opportunity presented by 'massification' to promote inclusionary pedagogic practice in higher education has been overshadowed by the pressure to a) teach vastly increased numbers of students on less money, and b) produce the right kind of evidence of effective teaching. So, whilst there is no doubt that (as adult educators used to complain), pedagogy in higher education was long overdue for examination and a major overhaul, this new pedagogy has been influenced (and even determined) by the spread of quality assurance procedures and frameworks to the teaching function of universities.

The initiative in these matters has been seized in large part by the 'modern' universities, i.e. those with no established tradition of an adult education specialism, and with (generally speaking) less concentration on research than their 'traditional' counterparts. The teaching orientation of the ex-polytechnics, and the manifestly inequitable position in which they were placed in terms of research, may have encouraged the sector to focus instead on the strength to which they traditionally laid claim – teaching. And out of this concern with teaching and a claim for teaching excellence, a new specialism – teaching and learning in higher education (TLHE) – has emerged. 'Traditional' universities have not been excluded from developments in higher education pedagogy, but are certainly less well represented within the specialism, and generally less inclined to adopt new pedagogic systems and methods (and external scrutiny of their practice) with enthusiasm. Paradoxically, their teaching quality ratings remain, in general, higher than those of the new universities despite this (THES, 2000).

Given the new student profile in HE, TLHE might be expected to bear a strong resemblance to 'the education of adults' – but in fact its relationship with this older specialism is extremely tenuous. In our SCUTREA paper last year (Malcolm and Zukas, 1999a), we described this discontinuity in terms of separate tribes; adult educators remained largely on the margins of the higher education community, leaving the development of HE pedagogy to a new breed of specialists called 'educational developers'.

As a result, TLHE speaks a different language from adult education, and is nourished by different intellectual sources. During the course of our recent research[1], which has, in part, tried to trace and analyse the links and distinctions between these two traditions; we were surprised to find that, insofar as TLHE places students in any context at all, it is usually in the world of the new flexible labour market and the modern workplace. This, combined with its dominant conceptualisation of the educator as a 'psycho-diagnostician' and facilitator of value-free learning, means that the focus of TLHE is very much upon the processes and outcomes of the classroom transaction, rather than its content, context or purpose. Innovation in classroom practice, for example, is promoted as a good in itself, not because it serves any wider social purpose, but because it is expected to 'improve learning' (Gibbs, 1992).

For adult educators, there has been much debate about the tendency to divorce teaching methods from educational content and purpose (e.g. Youngman, 1986, Brown, 1980). Until quite recently the debate had become focused on the appropriateness of (crudely categorised) radical/critical versus psychological/ instrumental models of pedagogic practice, and often manifested itself in the difference between the perspectives dominant in Britain and the USA respectively. The conference papers from the first international SCUTREA conference (the Transatlantic Dialogue: Zukas, 1988), illustrate the differences well. Almost without exception, the British papers were concerned with ideology, social purpose and difference (most famously Griffin's (1988) which has been much reproduced for students in Canada and the USA); the majority of papers from the USA were occupied with measurement of psychological attributes, elements of decontextualised student experience, typologies and so on.[2] Psychological/ instrumental approaches have not completely withered away, but have certainly ceased to dominate American adult education in the way in which they once did, as the challenges of 'positionality' have transformed educational thinking. This makes it all the more surprising (and ironic) that such psychological approaches have been seized upon so enthusiastically by British writers and practitioners in TLHE.

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[1] ESRC award R000222794:'Models of the educator in higher education: a bibliographic and conceptual map'.

Pedagogic divergences

Our recent research on the literature (and indirectly on the communities) of higher education pedagogy, has uncovered some themes in common HE pedagogic 'positions' which may help to illuminate the conceptual and ideological basis of adult education's exclusion from teaching and learning in HE. A fuller account of the research and the conceptual 'map' to which it has given rise can be found elsewhere (Malcolm and Zukas, 1999b, 2000; Zukas and Malcolm, 1999). For the purposes of this paper, we propose to use shorthand (and probably caricatural) identities for adult educators and TLHE practitioners (who are not necessarily higher education teachers). These identities may be traced back to the Kickers and New Pedagogues of myth and legend (see Malcolm and Zukas, 1999a) but, as with all caricatures, the characteristics which they exaggerate do have a basis in reality. So here, the typical adult educator is labelled the 'critical practitioner' and the typical TLHE practitioner the 'psycho-diagnostician'. We now consider how they differ along dimensions of pedagogic identity and practice.

Disciplinary community vs. pedagogic community

University teachers have traditionally conceived of themselves as members of a disciplinary community, with both research and pedagogic roles. The critical practitioner has to consider the content and purpose of her teaching as open to challenge, just as her research can be expected to question established orthodoxies within the discipline. Within adult education, the knowledge-content of disciplines has been interrogated and disciplinary boundaries broken, precisely because the pedagogic role of adult educators could not be divorced from the content of teaching. The critical practitioner therefore inhabits a 'knowledge-practice' community which is both (inter) disciplinary *and* pedagogic, since these are not seen as separate entities. The psychodiagnostician, on the other hand, assumes that the pedagogic role of the teacher is separate from the disciplinary role, that he or she inhabits the two separate communities simultaneously. This is the assumption which enables pedagogy to be analysed simply in terms of 'teaching and learning' rather than as an aspect of knowledge production, and in effect creates a new, artificially specialised community of (decontextualised) pedagogues. Even in those cases where pedagogy is discussed within a disciplinary context, for example in geography or chemistry (e.g. Waddick, 1994), the content of the discipline is generally assumed to be intact; the pedagogic role is to enable students to learn this content.

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[2] It is much more difficult to characterise contributions from Canada and Europe.

Learning within a community vs. individualised learning

The critical practitioner is not difficult to situate along this dimension. Her focus is very much upon learning within a community rather than individualised learning; students and teachers are considered to be social and cultural actors with identities emerging from their wider social experiences. The nature of and relations between the communities of which they are members are likely to be contested, and this is expected to have a bearing on both the processes and content of classroom activity. The conscious social orientation of much adult education practice means that 'student-centred' pedagogy has to involve the consideration of collective or community identities. The psychodiagnostician, on the other hand, is inevitably focused on the learner as an individual - specifically, as a manifestation of particular psychological tendencies, processes and dispositions which can be understood and utilised for the purpose of learning. Whilst this perspective does acknowledge relations between individuals (students and teachers), it does not generally extend its scope beyond the classroom transaction to the broader social or cultural context, or the community identities to which this gives rise. The individualistic focus of the psychodiagnostician is rendered particularly problematic in the overpopulated reality of many teaching situations in contemporary higher education.

Moral and social accountability vs. organisational accountability

Educators are always accountable to their organisation, but this dimension focuses on the primacy of organisational accountability over other forms of accountability. All educators are now under pressure to consider the consequences for the organisation of inadequate performance on quality measures, and to adhere to organisational requirements through ever-increasing scrutiny. Sophisticated methods of checking and measuring have been developed (commonly called quality assurance processes) which ensure that the individual educator works in an organisationally appropriate manner.

The psychodiagnostician can call on any number of procedures and instruments for describing and measuring pedagogic processes and student learning, which makes it easier for her or him to fulfil these new organisational requirements. The absence of content and purpose from the TLHE approach means that few contradictions should be encountered between 'good' pedagogic practice and organisational requirements; measurable evidence of 'student learning' constitutes fulfilment of both. This may indeed be why so many universities are keen to promote the empiricist quick-fixes of the psychodiagnostician.

But the advent of subject review, the latest articulation of quality assurance in British higher education, has made it increasingly difficult to prioritise moral and social over organisational accountability. Organisational scrutiny demands approved and codified course objectives and content for quality assurance purposes, reducing the scope for pedagogic responsiveness. Thus, for example, the negotiation of the curriculum with students (a prevalent ideal in adult education pedagogy until recently) is quite incompatible with current organisational demands; where knowledge is a commodity, the customer must be given full, or at least convincing, product information.

'The skills of being an academic are increasingly becoming isolated and fragmented in contexts in which the paramount requirement is to make the work more explicit, so that it can be more easily codified and measured by performance indicators' (Smyth, 1995, p.14).

The student as 'person in the world' vs. anonymous/invisible learner

Within the literature of TLHE, despite its frequent focus on 'the learner', there is little recognition of the socio-cultural situatedness of the individual. The learner frequently appears as an anonymous, decontextualised, degendered being whose principal distinguishing characteristics are 'personality' and 'learning style' (Brown, 1993). This approach, typical of psychometrics, can be traced back to the belief in psychology that it is possible, indeed desirable, to be able to predict people's behaviour. In order to do this, it is presumed that we all have characteristics which determine future actions (eg learning styles which determine how you learn). But this implies that learners 'have' learning styles, preferences and behaviours located somewhere inside them, which exist free of history, culture or context. Indeed, in order to study the individual, contextual and other factors are deliberately excluded from the scientific equation in order to discover universal truths. Thus, the psychodiagnostician does not need to consider the possibility that 'learning styles' may be constructed through discursive practices or may arise from the learner's history or socio-cultural position, and may not be an 'essential' part of a human being; they are, for the purposes of pedagogic practice, simply there.

The critical practitioner situates the learner very firmly in the social world and in the community of practice. It is impossible to disentangle the learner's situatedness from the educative process. Indeed, in much adult education literature, the age, class, race and gender of learners have been the prime focus of discussion, practice development and policy contestation; an understanding of positionality is integral to an understanding of pedagogy. This has yet to be developed in the literature of higher education pedagogy to any significant degree, despite the vast changes in the student body which have occurred in recent years.

Regaining access to higher education

We have tried to show how adult education perspectives illuminate very different concerns from those in TLHE. We are not harking back to 'the good old days' when adult educators were able to fight the universities on behalf of their students; to criticise their disciplines and pedagogies; to claim that only they were able to work with adults because only they understood adult students. But we believe that the accreting orthodoxies of TLHE become dangerous if they are unchallenged by those of us who remain adult educators at heart. We are still marginal; we remain within our community of practice, scandalised by our exclusion, and clinging to the vestiges of our tribal practices. But we have to find a way to include our research, our insights, in TLHE if we are to make higher education truly inclusive. And the paradox of a higher education which has so many adults, and so little adult education, is something we need to change.

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Re-theorising 'community': towards a dialectical understanding of inclusion.

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Introduction

The notion of 'inclusion', like that old chestnut of progressive adult education 'community', is deeply ambivalent: seemingly replete with both possibilities and problems. On the one hand, it promises, implicitly at any rate, serious consideration of the fact that many people are effectively excluded from any meaningful form of democratic citizenship and, presumably therefore, endorses a concern to do something about this; on the other hand, it is a dangerously portmanteau idea which systematically obfuscates some of the most salient social divisions and material inequalities **in** contemporary society, ie precisely those we must address if we want to be genuinely inclusive in our work. So, how inclusive is the inclusive community?

The ideological recycling of community in policy

Much has been made in the critical literature of the cosiness of the idea of community and of its functional ambiguity in policy (eg see Frazer and Lacey, 1993). Norman Dennis (1968), in a seminal critique, asked: why should the idea of community be so much more popular than a realistic appraisal of it would lead one to expect; what gives it 'that flavour of ideological beatification'? He went on to identify four dubious and suspect themes implicit in the official sponsorship of community in policy: first, community as social order and hierarchy, eg in the attempts of the settlement movement to graft a 'resident gentry' of 'natural leaders' onto poor, densely populated and potentially dissident urban areas; second, community as an instrument of 'divide and rule', ie in attempts to foster local and parochial identities in order to deflect the potential for a national and, **in** particular, a class identity; third, community as means of co-opting or diverting trouble makers, eg forming residents' associations on housing estates in order to absorb the energy of local activists in relatively innocuous ways; fourth, community as a way of redefining 'public issues' as 'personal troubles', ie reasserting social pathology over political economy. This critique was subsequently elaborated, initially and perhaps most influentially in the more radical accounts produced by the Home Office Community Development Project (CDP).

As far as 'community education' is concerned, the lesson seems to be clear:

> *In its relation to education, 'community' should be viewed as an ideological construct which is both historically and contextually specific. 'Community education' therefore only makes sense if it is located historically and situated in relation to state policy in a systematic and discriminating way.* (Martin, 1996)

Whenever we come across the inflection of education with the idea of community, we need to think about three things:

- context and contingency: what is the nature of the conjuncture of historical, material and political conditions in which the discussion arises?
- aims and purposes: in whose interests is policy being formulated in this way?
- outcomes: given that the unintended outcomes of policy may be as significant as its intended ones, what is the nature of struggle to control what community in its relation to education means - and whose side are we on?

A schematic account of the periodic ideological recycling of community in British adult education policy and practice might look something like this:

Ideology	*Purpose*	*Strategy*	*Construction of Community*
consensus	sponsorship	universalism	The 'whole' community
pluralism	co-option/incorporation	state reformism/selective intervention	'disadvantaged /dissonant communities
conflict	independent control	autonomy/ resistance	dissident/dissenting communities
'free' market	competition	marketisation/ commodification	competing communities of interest

Given this range of meanings, intentions and consequences, the question is: can the interest of the state in using the concept of community to manage and regulate people in communities be turned on its head, subverted and taken in a different direction? If so, how? Who is to be included and who is to be excluded in this process? Such questions, of course, have to be addressed in specific contexts.

The Scottish context

In Scotland, uniquely within the United Kingdom, a Community Education Service was established in most local authorities in response to the recommendations of the 1975 Alexander Report *Adult Education: The Challenge of Change* - both very much in line with the characteristically pluralist/reformist state strategies of the time. The structural outcome of Alexander was the bringing together of the work of the youth service and 'informal' adult education within a shared 'community development approach' to local educational work. The subsequent experience of this generic service has been somewhat uneven and erratic - for reasons too complex to go into here. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the 1998 Osler Report *Communities: Change through Learning* endorsed community education as a generic approach to educational work in communities - even if it was less than sanguine about the continuing need for a specifically designated local authority service to take responsibility for it.

For the purposes of this argument, suffice to say that professionally-endorsed courses in 'community education', incorporating elements of youth work, adult education and community development, are taught at degree and postgraduate levels in several Scottish institutions of higher education. This, coupled with recent political changes and the prospect of 'democratic renewal' in Scotland, is the context in which some of us have tried to develop our teaching collaboratively around the idea of 'retheorising community'. This is the title of a core theoretical course, which is taken by all third year undergraduate students and postgraduate diploma students in our own institution. The aim of the course is to develop an argument about the nature and purpose of educational work in communities which can then be taken away, as it were, and applied and tested in three specialist options in youth work, adult education and community work - of which students select one. What I want to suggest is that the way in which this common, core course addresses the reflexive task of *thinking about how we think about community in its relation to education* may provide a useful way of addressing some of the possibilities and problems inherent in the idea of inclusion - as well as some of the dilemmas of choice implicit within it.

It is important to emphasise that in this particular case our work as a team of teaching colleagues proceeds primarily from a common and broadly political position. This centres around a concern to ground our work in a shared commitment to using education as an instrument in the struggle to extend democracy, social justice and equality. In this sense, we would all see our work as congruent with the values that have informed the radical and social purpose traditions in adult education. Some of us would also take the view that radical educational work may not be best served by its instantiation within a particular professional interest or a distinctive set of educational competencies (eg see Shaw and Crowther, 1995; Alexander and Martin, 1995).

The dialectics of community

Our thinking about community in its relation to education starts from the idea of community as a way of describing the level and locus of a particular kind of educational work:

> *By referring to 'communities' .... we meant specified groups of actual people, not society as a whole and certainly not a market. In short, we used the term to indicate the 'place' and ,moment' of engagement with specific groups of people around their interests. (Jackson, 1995)*

Community, then, is posed as a relational concept which articulates the shared experience of groups, or collectivities, of people (which may be formed around a variety of common identities, interests or issues) at an intermediate level of social reality. In terms of C Wright Mills' (1970) terms, such communities are formed in the space between the micro politics of 'personal troubles' and the macro politics of 'public issues'. It is in the dialectics of community, understood in this way, that people experience, *collectively,* the possibilities of human agency within the preexisting constraints of structure. Anthony Giddens' 'structuration theory' is useful in this respect because it avoids the pitfalls of a crude structure-agency dichotomy by emphasising not only the mutual embeddeness of context and action but also - and in particular for our purposes as educators - the human capacity to make a difference. It also, incidentally, provides one way of combining a modernist political economy with a posttnodem sensitivity to the politics of difference - without getting stuck in too many intellectual cul *de sacs!* On this view, then, community education is understood as the educational process of deriving the curriculum from the lived experience of people in communities by intervening critically and creatively in the dialectics of community. This is what is distinctive - and, hopefully, subversive - about it.

The argument, therefore, is that such communities - often communities of resistance, struggle or endurance - are dialectically positioned between the possibilities of freedom and the realities of constraint. Indeed, the educational process of working in and with them may well suggest that their first lesson in freedom is to begin to understand the reality of un-freedom. This is a theoretical task as well as an educational purpose. It also suggests that notions of the inclusive community have their limits precisely because such communities (plural) are often formed in response to their exclusion from the wider community (singular). In this sense, they must, in effect, be strategically exclusive in order to be politically inclusive. That is, such communities are largely constituted by the communal experience of exclusion from a wide range of social, economic, political and educational activity which many other citizens take for granted.

It should be emphasised that, in this construction, community is anything but a cosy, romantic or nostalgic concept. We learn most clearly what it means from the voices of those 'minority' groups who are systematically subordinated and marginalised in our society. Writing about the black experience in contemporary British society, for example, Paul Gilroy (1987) states:

Community is as much about difference as it is about similarity and identity. It is a relational idea which suggests, for British blacks at least, the idea of antagonism - domination and subordination between one community and another. The word directs analysis to the boundary between these groups.

Crow and Allan (1994), in their useful review of the community studies literature and research, help to clarify the dynamics of community understood in this way. They identify four key points: first, communities should be understood as 'active creations' which develop within the specificities and contingencies of particular historical, material and policy contexts; second, it is at this intermediate level of social reality that people collectively live out the consequences of socioeconomic, political and cultural change; third, the impact of such change is systematically differentiated - particularly in terms of class, gender and 'race'; fourth, the problematic of community must be honestly confronted, ie it is precisely because communities are 'happenings' rather 'things' that we should expect them to be messy, ambivalent and contradictory spaces.

As already indicated, the central challenge in thinking about community and inclusion in this way is to confront the conjunction of the politics of position (within structure) and the politics of identity and difference (within culture) - and to see both the connections and the distinctions between them. The argument developed over the course is that this conjunction can only be understood theoretically and addressed pedagogically by coupling a modernist analysis with a postmodern sensibility as to how the effects of structure are unevenly inscribed and nuanced in the day-to-day experience of people in communities. In this sense, communities are the contradictory spaces in which the meta-narrative of the globalised market system works out its logic within the multiple and layered realities of the politics of everyday life.

Where, one might ask, is the 'vocational' element in all this? The course is premised upon the claim that the purpose of theoretical analysis and ideological argument is not to 'tell' us what to do in practice; rather, it is to stimulate creative ideas and critical thinking which we can then carry (in our heads - and, possibly, also in our hwns!) out into the field of educational practice. Michael Collins (1991) puts this view of the theory-practice relationship well.

Though an understanding of theoretical constructions is important to any serious vocational endeavour, it is more efficacious to think in terms of engaging thoughtfully with theory and, then, putting ourselves into practice rather than putting theory into practice. In other words, serious engagement with theoretical models improves our potential as reflective practitioners, which **in** *turn manifests itself in actual performance.*

Nevertheless, it is essential that this argument is grounded in policy as well as politics - and to see how the two are connected.

Policy: the need to 're-invent politics'

When Tony Blair famously announced his government's priorities as 'Education, education, education', apparently he simply meant what he subsequently said: 'Education is the best economic policy we have'. Perhaps we should be disappointed rather than surprised. Despite encouraging shifts in the rhetoric of policy (eg in the Delors, Fryer and Osler reports), most of the signs so far seem to be of continuity rather than change.

Two discourses of citizenship continue to feed powerfully into our work and to dominate our thinking. Both are fundamentally economistic in the sense that they posit at the centre of our conception of the suddenly (and suspiciously) fashionable notion of lifelong learning the idea that human beings are essentially economic animals: our purpose is to produce and consume, to have rather than to be. The world we inhabit is a marketplace in which the only relations that really matter are the material relations of production and exchange.

The first economistic discourse constructs the adult learner as worker and producer. Education is the engine of economic competitiveness in the global market; unemployment and the skills gap are the consequence of not getting this right (eg see Coffield, 1999). This supply-side view of adult education reduces it to training for work: preparing people for their roles in production, wealth creation and profit (mainly other people's, of course). The second economistic discourse constructs the adult learner as customer or consumer. Education is reduced to a demand-side commodity which can be bought and sold like any other. This blinkered view was starkly expressed by a senior Department of Education and Science official in the late 1980s when he said, deliberately echoing Mrs Thatcher's notorious aphorism about society: 'There is no such thing as adult education - only adults in classes'. Adult education is reduced at a stroke to a market transaction.

It is not, of course, that these economistic discourses do not matter - self-evidently, they do. Rather, it is that they simply do not account for enough of what adult education, let alone lifelong learning (especially when it is, as it increasingly is, linked to notions of active citizenship and social inclusion), should be about. As adult and community educators, we are not just servicers of the economy or traders in the educational marketplace. On the contrary, what we always claim is that our interest lies in enabling people to develop to their full potential as rounded human beings, This suggests that adult education should be about helping people to engage actively, creatively and critically in a wide range of social and political roles which occur outside both the workplace and the marketplace, ie in all the communities of identity, affiliation and interest in which we spend the rest of our lives.

It is this more holistic and civic sense of what it means to be human to which the radical and social purpose traditions in adult and community education has always spoken - with clarity and conviction. And, if New Labour is seriously interested in reconnecting lifelong learning with active citizenship and social inclusion, it is this tradition of adult education and community-based learning which it must seek to revive - and to cherish. What this requires is both the conceptual space in which we can begin, once again, to think and talk and read about these things and, of course, the material resources to do this kind of work. And this must be made possible especially in those marginalised and impoverished communities in which so many citizens have lost faith in the political system - a system which has effecfively excluded them from membership and participation. Without opening up this critical and creative space, there is no prospect of using lifelong learning to turn the rhetoric of active citizenship and social inclusion into a reality.

The continuing evidence of the so-called 'democratic deficit' and what Ralph Miliband (1994) has termed the 'hegemony of resignation' suggests that we need, in Zygmunt Bauman's words, to 're-invent politics' (Bauman, 1999) - and this process must start in communities. Essentially, what is missing in our lives today is the opportunity to meet as citizens and, once again, make democracy work. The point to emphasise is that historically the kind of adult education and community-based learning in which citizens met together to talk and learn and argue helped to fill precisely this space - and to make it a uniquely democratic and creative space. Indeed , it could be said that in a very real sense collective adult learning, often autonomous and self-directed, *constituted* this space.

In 're-theorising community' in our work, we are, in effect, trying to recreate some of this space: the intermediate space between the private lives of individuals and their public lives as citizens, where, in Habennasian terms, the 'lifeworld' meets the 'systems - world'. This has always been the distinctive curricular and pedagogical terrain of the 'adult education of engagement' (Jackson, 1995). And yet, it has now all but disappeared - squeezed in the vice of possessive individualism and globalised capital. Reconstructing this space is at once an urgent educational task, intellectual challenge and political purpose. It is also a project that has a particular resonance in Scotland today - where there has been so much hope of democratic renewal, and disappointingly little evidence of it to date (see Crowther, Martin and Shaw, 1999).

Conclusion:listening to voices from below

What does all this mean in terms of the politics of everyday life in excluded or marginalisesed communities? And what does it mean for our work? What we have to do is ask people in such communities what *their* answers to these questions are, and to help them to find them. This should be part of our pedagogy and part of our curriculum.

To illustrate what this entails, I want to finish by referring briefly to some of our current work with the disability movement: a 'new social movement' which knows a great deal about the problems of exclusion and the challenges of inclusion. In working with this community, whose members daily live out the dialectical relationship between the micro politics of identity and the macro politics of position, we must seek primarily to learn from them and to do what we can to resource their struggle for active citizenship and social inclusion (see Petrie and Shaw, 1999) Thus, for example, one of my colleagues runs what was once a course in 'Special Educational Needs' and is now a course in 'Inclusive Education', which is largely taught by activist members of the local disabled people's movement. The tutor's role is, essentially, to ensure that their voice *is* the curriculum and to enable students to understand the theoretical, educational and political significance of this. The 'professional' task is, essentially, to assess how community-based education can be deployed as a resource for this community' s struggle for democracy, A related development is a major national research project, funded by the National Lottery. This is called 'Experiencing inclusive education: what does it mean?' and its basic purpose is to make the voice of disabled people heard in the debate about inclusive education and to give them the opportunity to back this up with rigorous research evidence. The project is therefore managed and controlled by a local disability-led action group, which is primarily concerned with increasing disabled people's access to educational opportunities, and is supported with the expertise and resources of two university departments, the Department of Nursing Studies and the Department of Community Education.

In both these cases, we are seeking ways of using our work to enable those who are so often defined and excluded as 'Other' to generate their own 'knowledge from below' - and to teach us what it means. This is the practical consequence of 're-theorising community' in the way I have tried to describe and, in the process, testing out some of the possibilities (as well as the limits) of the notion of inclusion.

Note: I wish to acknowledge the creative collaboration in this work of my colleagues Jim Crowther, Liz Elkind and Mae Shaw.

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What can we learn from wise fools and sages?

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Wisdom.
A form of understanding that unites a reflective attitude and a practical concern. The aim of the attitude is to understand the fundamental nature of reality and its significance for living a good life. The object of the practical concern is to form a reasonable conception of a good life, given the agents' character and circumstances, and to evaluate the situations in which they have to make decisions and act from its point of view. These evaluations are often difficult because many situations are complex, conceptions of a good life are incompletely formed, and the variability of individual character and circumstances render general principles insufficiently specific. Wisdom may be identified then with good judgement about the evaluation of complex situations and conceptions of a good life in the light of a reflective understanding of the human condition. (Ted Honderich, 1995: 912).

I have selected this definition from a companion to philosophy for two reasons: firstly, I feel its emphasis on both pragmatics and reflection is germane to adult education; secondly, it acknowledges that a definitive concept of wisdom is rendered problematic in the light of life's complexity. In this paper, I hope to probe what it might mean to be 'wise' primarily through literary depictions of wise fools and sages. I will not lay claim to approaching what wisdom might be in any definitive sense; however I do hope to begin to flesh out a description, and to point to its relevance to adults engaged in learning. Firstly, I will make some general claims relating to the two basic building blocks of the above definition: a reflective attitude and a practical concern.

A reflective attitude: An emphasis on reflection will be familiar to adult educators. Although there can be no decisive separation between the learning that happens in childhood and adulthood, one claim that has been made for a distinctive field relates to the significant 'reservoir' of experience accumulated by the time one reaches what is conventionally designated as adulthood. Given that the accumulation of life experiences is perceived to be so crucial to adult learning, how does it relate to an attitude of reflection? In the most obvious sense, there is more available to reflect on, to recollect. As one ages, so the reservoir swells, and more memories are stored. The importance of memory in trying to approach what one might mean by 'wisdom' will be explored in due course, with reference to the work of Mary Warnock (1987). For now, I will merely add that as our reservoir of experience swells, so the possible number of connections to be made between experiences increases - uncountable connections. Later, I will suggest that finding patterns in these correspondences is fundamental to anticipation as well as memory. Both forms of projection, into the past and into the future, are mutually dependent, and I will illustrate this with reference to the relationship between wisdom and prophecy.

A practical concern: 'The object of the practical concern is to form a reasonable conception of a good life'. Here 'good' potentially has two meanings, both of which are applicable. Good in the sense of behaving ethically, and good in the sense of being happy and fulfilled. The latter meaning cannot be divorced from the former when discussing wisdom. Philosophers, from classical times onwards, marry thoughts concerning an individual's wellbeing with that of society at large. An individual cannot experience the good life in a vacuum. Similarly, a society explicitly striving to promote individual happiness is defeated by alienation. It is the practical concern of the individual dwelling in the world that provides the backdrop to the development of wisdom. Experience of the world and its vagaries, for example attachment and loss, is a precondition of the development of moral maturity. This latter point is most germane to considering the role played by wise fools and sages in literature and mythology. I shall proceed to elaborate both roles, for fools and sages have a similar structural function in narrative, and ultimately the fool is a sage in a jester's guise. Perhaps it is for this reason that the fool is the supreme embodiment of the bitter-sweet in literature, adding immeasurably to the moral texture. And fools have a distinctly educational function, accepting complexity, puncturing posturing or illusion, and embracing the good and bad in their peers.

Nothing that is so is so: Shakespeare's fools

This fellow is wise enough to play the fool,
And to do that craves a kind of wit.
He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
The quality of persons, and the time;
Not, like the haggard, check at every feather
That comes before his eye. This is a practice
As full of labour as a wise man's art;
For folly that he wisely shows, is fit;
But wise men, folly-fall'n, quite taint their wit.

These are Viola's musings on the fool, Feste, in *Twelfth Night* (III, i, 66). They amply illustrate several features of a fool's wisdom: it is equal to a wise man's, it is an art (though it may appear artless), its subtlety is dependent on close observation of those around him (or her). This observation is allied to a form of detachment from the proceedings: the fool is able to comment from the margins, using humorous guise to level blistering criticisms, albeit from a 'safe' distance. Although detached in terms of the main action, the liminal position of fools in narrative allows them to intervene in terms of the moral development of central characters; they provide a 'touchstone' for protagonists, wise partners in dialogue able to advise even the most elevated of monarchs by virtue of their ambiguous position. However, their detachment should not be equated with disinterest. Observers they may be, but they are as subject to human emotions as the next man. Lear's Fool provides devoted counsel, even when unheeded, in the face of the king's tragic decline. Robert Hillis Goldsmith (1958) draws attention to the compassion of Shakespeare's fools:

> *Although it would be a mistake to regard Shakespeare's fools as mere personifications of wisdom, it is nevertheless true that each possesses his special virtue. Touchstone, by the air of realism which he breathes into the antique forest of romance, may be said to embody the Aristotelian virtue of truthfulness. Feste, by his advocacy of moderation in loving and laughing, adds to truthfulness the virtue of tolerance. He lives in and expresses the golden mean. Lear's Fool, however, transcends his fellows in the quality of his wisdom. He is the supremely wise fool who expresses in his heartfelt devotion to Cordelia and his king the Christian virtues of patience, humility, and love.* (1958: 67).

So we are returned to complexity. The fool both recognises the complexity of existence, and expresses a complex, humanising, response: 'Only a complex personality could hold such contrarities in equipoise.' (Goldsmith, 1958: 99). Is there anything that can be said about the nature of this complexity? Two attitudes are particularly pertinent in the case of wise fools: in relation to their observation of the world, they recognise relativity, and do not take things at face value. In relation to their behaviour when engaging with the world, they live according to an ethic of moderation in all things - as Goldsmith observes, Aristotle's golden mean. When Feste remarks 'Nothing that is so is so' (*Twel*, IV, i, 9), Goldsmith relates this to his moral education:

His attitude is traditional; one which he shares with Socrates, Erasmus, and most humanists. His recognition that truth often belies appearances leads Feste not away from but toward a comic and moral view of life. (1958: 100).

If a blending of detached observation with humanistic sympathetic engagement is paradoxical, it is fittingly so. The complexity alluded to may be slippery to identify precisely because it is comprised of paradoxes held in tension. No other figures in Shakespeare's plays are so keenly aware of light and shade, or so adept at living well with the nuances of a textured world, all this evidenced in their words and actions.

But how do they arrive at this maturity? Little biography is given for wise figures, though they are so closely implicated in the biographies of those whom they 'teach'. It is difficult to imagine the admixture of pleasure and pain involved in the growth of an individual to whom society gives the epithet of wisdom, though there are exemplars like Christ, the Buddha, and other teachers. We may also approach comprehension by generalising from our relationships with real or fictional others as well as from our own experience. Even learning from a role model, by example, involves forging connections with things held in a learner's mind. Mary Warnock (1987) outlines the central importance of memory in the life of experience. She presents a non-reductionist account, in which memory is highly charged with emotion as well as highly prized. Crucial to her account is the close link between memory and imagination, a link that bears closer scrutiny because I hope it will further illuminate those aspects of wisdom embodied by fools and sages in literature.

Memory and imagination

In philosophy, recollection has often been conceived of as a summoning of mental 'images' from the house in which memories are stored. An alternative is to conceive of memory not as an image, but as a special type of knowledge, a position adopted by the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1988):

Bergson regarded memory as the point of interaction between two totally incommensurable entities. Memory has to function as the bridge between the embodied, mechanical, determinate world of science and practical affairs, and the spiritual world, of which we are aware only by intuition, and whose truths can never be expressed in language that is wholly accurate or precise. (Warnock, 1987: 28).

The first kind of memory, habit memory, is the memory of the everyday with which we are familiar: specific memories of events which took place in the past, impressions of objects, the memory of a list of things needed for a particular purpose and so on. This kind of memory is constrained by language demanding a serial spatial view of things - a view that is necessary for us to dwell in the practical world. The second kind of memory, pure memory, is, of necessity, much more difficult to articulate. Perhaps it can be imagined as being more akin to 'insight' than to 'sight'. Bergson describes it as an awareness of 'pure duration' which is fluid and is not comprised of composite parts.

Warnock suggests that habit memory and pure memory are two ends of a continuum, but that pure memory is only accessible through intuition when the conscious mind is not engaged. Intuitive connections between things are made *below* the level of consciousness. What might Warnock mean by intuition? Intuition can be described as 'an alleged direct relation, analogous to visual seeing, between the mind and something abstract and so not accessible to the senses.' (Honderich, 1995: 415). In Bergson's philosophy, intuitive, spontaneous memory can only occur when the brain's defences are down (it is separate from a deliberate conscious striving to recollect).

Warnock asserts that Bergson's scheme has a descriptive power, that, phenomenologically, it approaches something that might be true about our experience of the ways in which memory functions. What about anticipation? Jean-Paul Sartre (1972) treats memory and anticipation as parallel mental activities: knowledge of past and future pervade our lives. Here, Sartre is referring to our extrapolation from past to future, which at a very basic level is necessary for survival. But it is also a capacity of mind that can reach high levels of sophistication. Take the example of another wise figure, the sage Njal, of the thirteenth-century Icelandic *Njal's Saga*. Njal is described as being both wise and prescient, the second quality being a defining characteristic of the first:

> *He was so skilled in law that no one was considered his equal. He was a wise and prescient man. His advice was sound and benevolent, and always turned out well for those who followed it. He was a gentle man of great integrity; he remembered the past and discerned the future, and solved the problems of any man who came to him for help.* (Magnusson and Palsson, 1960: 74).

So, like Shakespeare's fools, Njal is a mediator - in his case, literally a law-keeper - and in possession of qualities associated with a moderate temperament, such as benevolence, gentleness and integrity. Perhaps most notably, his gift of prescience is explicitly allied to past as well as future time-sense, highlighting awareness of their parallel nature. But is Njal's gift supernatural in origin?

> *Njal was prescient; he could see aspects of the future, blurred glimpses illuminated by sudden ambiguous shafts of knowledge...In addition to fate, the saga has constant recourse to the supernatural...it is important to remember that in the thirteenth century and earlier, these manifestations of the supernatural were wholeheartedly believed in - ghosts, prophecies, dreams, hallucinations, fetches, portents. The audience believed in them, and the story-teller believed in them. In the second place, this supplied the author with an accepted and valuable literary device. By means of prophecy and visions, he could adumbrate future events without compromising his suspense effect or the conventional chronological presentation of the narrative.* (Magnusson and Palsson, 1960: pp.16-17).

A literary device, certainly, but could prophecy also provide an insight into the relationship between memory, anticipation and intuition? The key to this relationship lies in the term 'discernment' and its relationship to problem-solving. Njal's prophetic vision can be read as a form of heuristic: he remembers well, and extrapolates from significant patterns in the past to future events. He practises divination *on the basis of his experience*. The use of heuristics for pattern recognition has been documented in the case of chess - for example, in the anticipation of an opponent's move. It could also be related to notions of expertise: the individual who becomes expert at something may be so practised that their responses begin to operate at an unconscious level, seeming to skip logical stages. In this saga, and in others, the vividness and completeness of some prophecies militate against the notion that they are solely a combination of astute observation coupled with good sense applied heuristically to possible outcomes. This is a feature of the context of thirteenth-century beliefs combined with the narrative function of such episodes: they prefigure the action, thus increasing the tension of the story, and providing a framework within which to structure events. I think it is significant that they are attributed to a man such as Njal, a mediator, a man of compassion and sound judgement (incidentally, also a character without an account of his childhood). I would like to suggest that these moments of prescience, explicitly linked as they are to memory in the narrative, can also be linked to Bergson's notion of pure intuitive memory.

We have seen how, for Bergson, such experiences are unintelligible in language. Warnock, however, suggests that through artistic endeavour such as poetry and autobiography, moments of truth might be brought to light, and speech. She draws on the writings of Proust, for one, to illustrate her thesis that remembering can effect a restoration of lost paradise. The paradise in question is *time*, made up of a series of moments presently inaccessible but nevertheless 'lying in wait, in case chance should bring to us a sensation connected with them, which can drag them up out of oblivion. For each past sensation is inextricably connected with others.' (1987: 99). Perhaps an unanticipated detail might summon up past sensations - for example the shape and texture of a stone, a smell, a taste, an action - and take us beyond time. The challenge is to make intuitive truths thus gained accessible to others.

Njal's prescience is a form of bringing to speech something of the truth that can be felt in anticipation, in the manner that recollection expressed in literature can vividly confront us with aspects of truth about the world. It is the mirror of 'pure' memory. Surely it is no accident that a wise figure is the conduit. Foresight has always been associated with wisdom, and with people or creatures that are in some way liminal, inhabiting the margins. Think of the song of those littoral creatures, the sirens: it is an expression of the unadorned universal truths that human ears cannot bear to hear (or the mind to comprehend). Yet this is what, according to Plato, the soul strives towards throughout life:

Think how its kinship with divine and immortal and eternal makes it long to associate with them and apprehend them; think what it might become if it followed this impulse wholeheartedly and was lifted by it out of the sea in which it is now submerged, and if it shed all the rocks and shells which, because it feeds on the earthly things that men think bring happiness, encrust it in a wild and earthly profusion. (Plato, *The Republic*, 611e - 612a).

The impulse towards such a divestment, towards clear-sightedness, is the soul's love of wisdom. The eternity that Plato describes is one constituted by the eternal, immutable Forms. Though this may differ significantly from the timelessness alluded to earlier in the philosophy of Bergson, and of Warnock, the impulse to reach something pure, something that encompasses the spiritual to complement our practical existence, is manifest in each approach.

Intuition and adult education

Clear sight, then, involves attending to our experiences, our memories as well as our 'intuitions', however we want to define them. These intuitions rest in the connections we make between things we have encountered. As far as education is concerned, this has a number of implications. It may logically lead one to a pedagogy founded on experience, such as Dewey's, in which pupils are encouraged to make meaning from the primacy of interface with the world through active experimentation. It might also lead one to an education founded on an interdisciplinary ideal, where the scope for making connections is increased by virtue of the breadth and variety of topics covered. Furthermore, a phenomenological approach is also compatible with the reflective impulse that seeks to heed intuition, bracketing off preconceptions in an effort to access the pure memory. These educational implications are not mutually exclusive, indeed, perhaps they are mutually supporting. They are derived from thinking about the sage in particular. What can we learn from wise fools?

In addition to discussions of moral agency, fools might contribute their complexity to educational practice. Their complexity rests to a large extent on their acknowledgement of ambiguity in life. Artistic endeavour has always been a great source of insight into existential light and shade. Reflection and discussion in the adult classroom could be stimulated by, for example, the introduction of novels, plays and poems that reflect a particular existential theme. I am aware that this suggestion is not especially new; many teachers already integrate literature, art, film and so on into classes that might ostensibly be 'about' something else. These initiatives are welcome. Imagine how drawing on fictional, biographical and autobiographical accounts of discrimination might qualitatively enrich a course dealing with equality of opportunity. The potential for enrichment lies in the human ability to empathetically engage with the experience of others, with their personal light and shade. Warnock (1987) directs attention to the part that literature and, in particular, biography, can play in harnessing memory and moments of insight. Perhaps entailments of investing memory-work with such power might be a wider use of reminiscence therapy in the adult educational context, as well as the continued flourishing of biographical methods in research.

Finally, although the wise figures discussed in this paper are exceptional in many ways, the aspiration towards a good life, wisely lived, is not beyond the reach of anyone - regardless of their educational background. It is worth noting that wise fools rarely possess any formal qualification beyond their experience coupled with the aforementioned tolerance and moderation. Alain de Botton (2000), drawing on the ideas of Montaigne who reacted against the notion that those with university education are any wiser than those without, comments:

He was pointing to a highly peculiar source of wisdom - you and me. If we attend properly to our experiences and learn to consider ourselves plausible candidates for an intellectual life, it is, implied Montaigne, open to all of us to arrive at insights no less profound than those in the great ancient books. The thought is not easy. We are educated to associate good thinking with submission to big names, not with an exploration of our own views. Montaigne tried to return us to ourselves. I should stop parroting. (2000: 25).

Wise fools are keen students, albeit not necessarily in a traditional sense. They know we have much to learn from one another. Potentially there is a wise fool, or a sage, in everyone.

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How the other half lives: A case study of successful and unsuccessful mature applicants in Irish higher education

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Introduction

The current political, economic and social context in Ireland sees heavy responsibility placed on education in alleviating social exclusion, with adult education in particular viewed as playing a major role in this regard. Much policy and debate has been geared toward mature student participation in higher education (Department of Education and Science, 1998; Fleming & Murphy, 1997; Fleming *et al*, 1999; Lynch, 1999; Universities Act, 1997). There has been sustained pressure from policy bodies and other advocacy groups to increase access to higher education for mature students and other non-traditional populations. The 1998 Green Paper on adult education (Department of Education and Science, 1998) refers to mechanisms of access as 'compensatory' forms of adult education. Increasing the numbers of mature students is viewed as one important way of combating educational disadvantage.

One question, however, that rarely gets asked is: who gets into college? Although research has been carried out on participation rates in third level for both the traditional and mature-age cohorts (Clancy, 1988, 1995, 1996; Lynch, 1997, 1999), little research exists that compares those who were successful in gaining entry with those who were not successful in gaining entry into higher education. How do the educational and socio-economic backgrounds of successful applicants compare to those of unsuccessful applicants? How do their experiences of the application process compare?

The purpose of this paper is to outline research findings that contribute to our knowledge of these normally hidden demographics and experiences. A study funded by the Irish Higher Authority and published in 1999 as *No room for adults?* (Inglis & Murphy, 1999) provided an opportunity to examine the nature and experiences of these two groups.[1] The research focused on University College Dublin (UCD), which has the largest number of students in the state and proportionally the lowest mature student provision. UCD also attracts huge demand from mature applicants for entry onto its degree programmes. In 1997, UCD received 1,347 applications from adults who wished to enter full-time degree courses on the basis of mature years. As such, UCD offers an opportunity to investigate some of the claims made for access as a means of tackling educational disadvantage in Ireland.

Mature Admissions in University College Dublin

Established in 1851, and based in Belfield on the South side of Dublin, UCD has the largest number of students of any Irish university (17,105 in 1997 of which 14,419 were full-time). Unlike other Irish universities, UCD does not have a specific policy on mature students. It does not have a formal quota system in place. It is left to each individual faculty to formulate a policy for non-traditional entrants on the grounds of mature years. Across faculties, mature applicants are encouraged to meet the normal entry requirements (Leaving

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[1] The author acknowledges the contribution of Tom Inglis in the writing of the original report.

Certificate points), and not to rely on special consideration on the basis of mature years.

This privilege is granted only in a limited number of exceptional cases and there is no guarantee that any applicant will be successful. Any matriculated applicant over 23 years of age who is not awarded a special place will be considered on the basis of school-leaving results in competition with other applicants (UCD information brochure).

The admissions rate for mature applicants in UCD is extremely low. In 1997, UCD received 1,347 applications for adults who wished to enter full-time degree courses on the basis of mature years. Only 81, or 6 per cent of the 1,347 applicants, were offered places. From a different angle, there were 3,366 places on offer to all prospective undergraduate students. Only 100, or 3 per cent, of these places were offered to mature applicants. This figure is lower than the national average of 5 per cent.

Each of the eight Irish universities has its own admissions procedure and mature student entry requirements, but most operate on a quota system, reserving between 5 and 10 per cent of places on their full-time course for mature students (Department of Education and Science, 1999). Although UCD has its own policy, it shares certain important characteristics with the rest of the Irish university sector. It relies almost exclusively on Leaving Certificate points (equivalent of A levels) as the main criterion for entry, with a lack of acknowledgement of other forms of entry. Also, like other Irish universities, UCD does not formally recognise foundation and return-to-learning courses as access routes. Mature applicants who complete such programmes are not guaranteed places on degree programmes.

Methodology

Detailed questionnaires were sent to the population of successful applicants to full-time degree programmes (N = 98) and a random sample of 200 names from the list of unsuccessful applicants. To protect confidentiality, the Admissions Office in UCD agreed to send the questionnaire and a letter of introduction explaining the background, method and purpose of the study. 62 responses were received from the successful applicants, giving a response rate of 63 per cent. The response rate for unsuccessful applicants was 37 per cent (N = 74). This is an adequate response rate given the low level of response to postal questionnaires in general and that, so to speak, the unsuccessful applicants owed UCD nothing, and may have been resentful at having had their applications rejected. In order to explore their experience of the application process, respondents were invited to participate in focus group interviews. 20 respondents took part. Findings from both the questionnaires and the focus groups are included below.

A Profile of Successful and Unsuccessful Applicants

How do successful and unsuccessful applicants compare in terms of demographic characteristics? Table 1 outlines some of the findings from the surveys. Both groups are more likely to be male, single with no children, although unsuccessful applicants tend to be younger (56 per cent).

There are some educational differences between the two groups. While 82 per cent of successful applicants completed their Leaving Certificate, the corresponding figure for unsuccessful applicants was 71 per cent. Also, successful mature applicants were much more likely (67 per cent compared to 48 per cent) to have fulfilled basic third level matriculation requirements, that is, had obtained at least 2 honours in subjects in which they had taken honours papers and had passed 4 other subjects, including Maths, English and Irish. This finding, combined with the fact that nearly half (47 per cent) of the successful applicants had 4 or more honours in their Leaving Certificate, compared to just 14 per cent in the sample of unsuccessful applicants, suggest that mature applicants who manage to gain entry to UCD are much more likely to have been relatively successful in prior state examinations.

There is also a correlation between mature entry into UCD and applicants' education qualifications post-Leaving Certificate. While unsuccessful applicants were more likely (61 per cent compared to 36 per cent for successful applicants) to have continued onto further education courses (clerical, city and guilds, other vocational programmes), those who gained entry to UCD were more likely to have continued onto higher education (34 per cent compared to 14 per cent). It appears that, for many successful mature applicants, gaining access to UCD is, in effect, second-chance education, while gaining entry would have counted as a first chance for most unsuccessful applicants.

Their previous employment records also provide some interesting findings. Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of unsuccessful applicants have a history of working in various low-skilled jobs, including manual and service-type occupations. Only one third (35 per cent) of successful applicants had a similar work history. They were also twice as likely to have worked in stable employment (36 per cent compared to 18 per cent) prior to gaining entry to UCD. Although their parents' occupational history would not be too dissimilar (53 per cent of parents' of successful applicants were professionals compared to 46 per cent for unsuccessful applicants), the parents of those who gained entry to UCD were more likely to have gone to college (22 per cent), than the parents of those who did not gain entry (14 per cent).

To summarise, although full-time mature students resembled unsuccessful applicants in terms of gender, marital status and in not having children, they differed when it came to education and occupational background. Those who gained entry into UCD were more likely to have had previous experience of higher education, and more likely to have done relatively well in the Leaving Certificate. They were also more likely to have parents who had been to college. The social backgrounds of successful mature applicants in UCD are, then, somewhat similar to standard entry students in higher education generally (Clancy, 1988).

Table 1: Social Profile: Successful and Unsuccessful Applicants

Characteristics	Successful	Unsuccessful
General:		
Male	58	55
Under 30 years	44	56
Single	63	70
No children	69	68
Education:		
Completed leaving certificate	82	71
Fulfilled matriculation requirements	67	48
Previous Experience of H.E.	34	14
Further Ed. Qualifications	36	61
Socio-economic status		
Worked in stable employment	36	18
Works in manual/service type jobs	34	65
Socio-economic background		
Parents were professionals	53	46
Parents went to third level	22	14

Experience of Applying to UCD

The demographic findings indicate that some differences exist between successful and unsuccessful mature applicants to full-time degree programmes in UCD. How do these differences manifest themselves in applying to UCD and being accepted or rejected? Do they have a bearing on the admissions process? It is likely that the higher level of education qualifications among successful applicants, in terms of both their Leaving Certificate results and experience of higher education, is a major factor in their gaining entry to UCD. It must be stated, however, that about half of the unsuccessful applicants fulfilled third-level matriculation requirements, and as such satisfy the basic requirements for traditional entry into Irish higher education. At the same time, the average Leaving Certificate result was much lower for unsuccessful applicants. This importance placed on educational qualifications suggests that hidden competition exists between mature applicants, paralleling the points-based competition for places in the traditional school-age cohort.

The second issue that this paper addresses is whether or not the application process had a bearing on gaining entry to UCD. Did the experience of applying to UCD differ for successful and unsuccessful applicants? The data gathered from the focus group sessions allowed a closer look at this issue, and how it may have affected the outcome.

Experience of unsuccessful applicants

Unsuccessful applicants said they put a great deal of time and effort into their applications to different universities, including UCD. They were dismayed at the lack of information available about what is required to gain entry, and the correct procedures to follow in making an application. Universities have different procedures. UCD uses a version of the Central Applications Office (CAO) form, while Trinity College and National University of Ireland, Maynooth have their own special forms. There appears to be a lack of information as to what applicants need to gain entry. One male student did not receive any outside advice. 'I just sort of worked it out in my head where I was falling down.' Another experienced problems in obtaining information about UCD procedures.

Trying to find out how do you apply for UCD, was, I dunno, trying to find a holy grail of information out there somewhere. And then I heard from other people, 'oh there's this CV involved, or you go to the Faculty itself' or something. But it's all like pub expert type stuff, you know? There's nothing hard and fast, no information to say this is what you do.

This lack of information leads to applicants coming under the influence of gossip, hearsay and conjecture. One of the younger mature applicants provided a litany of myths surrounding the mature application process.

Did anyone go to a local TD? That was suggested to me, you know, you should go down to your local TD. I remember someone saying to me you should do a TEFL [Teaching English as a Foreign Language] course. Then someone said you're better off doing two subjects in the Leaving Cert. Someone else said ... you're better off going on the Interrail travel for about 6 months; that'll stand to you. So nobody knows.

Completing TEFL courses and getting the backing of your local TD are perhaps innocuous items of local knowledge when it comes to informing people of their choices. What could be more damaging is the assumption that places are open to any mature applicant who wants them. This has the effect of creating an over-optimistic view of the admissions process.

I think there was this kind of fallacy going around that you know as a mature student, you don't need points. Most people are ill informed, and they think initially like, oh yeah well that means that you just get in *like. But they don't tell you that they only have so many places for mature students.*

Experience of successful applicants

Successful entrants were generally in the same position as those who were not successful. They were confused about the application process and the criteria used for admissions. One 46 year-old woman applied to Science, and although she already experienced higher education - she did five years of Medicine at UCD - she did not understand what the College was looking for. 'I didn't know. I mean I filled in the CAO form, but ... didn't actually know what the qualifications were for me, somebody like me. And it was very hard to know what chance we had.' She is now in the fourth year of her Science degree, and she is still not sure why she was accepted. 'I was quite surprised to be honest ...I didn't have any problems at all, I applied through the CAO and had an interview. I was accepted I think on the combination of the two. I'm not sure. I had done a few years of medicine about 25 years ago. And that helped.'

Another middle-aged woman spoke about the confusion in the admissions process, and what the implications were for those who were unsuccessful in their applications.

I think people maybe don't know what they should do in order to get in. I got in on the first time, which was fine, but ehm, on the other hand when I was applying, I didn't really know what my chances were, or what I could do to enhance them ... people who don't get accepted on the first time sometimes don't know why, and therefore it's a bit hard to go about it maybe, and to know what to do to get in the next time.

The admissions procedure appeared arbitrary to these students. A third-year mature Agriculture student echoed the sentiments of the unsuccessful applicants. 'I don't actually know what the formal structure is, it seems to be different from department to department, so I don't know what they could actually do to improve it, as I don't know what it is in the first place.' In reality, people do not know what happens after they send in their application forms for consideration. There was much guessing based on stories and other people's experiences. 'You see that's one of the problems, we've absolutely no idea, particularly with UCD, you know. All these machinations are going on in the background, and like no-one has any idea whether it's the flick of a dice or it's the [Leaving Certificate] points.'

Conclusion

How do the findings of this paper contribute to the current debate on access and social exclusion in Ireland? Admittedly, the findings are limited as they represent only one higher education institution. Other Irish institutions could be said to be more 'adult friendly' than UCD. Caution needs to be taken in extrapolating findings from one case study to the whole of Irish higher education. At the same time, issues are highlighted in the findings that have some bearing on the national context of access, educational disadvantage and higher education.

The first issue relates to the admissions process. Adult learners who were successful in their applications, were as confused about admissions procedures in UCD as applicants who were unsuccessful. The criteria used to assess applications were as big a mystery to those who gained entry, as they were to those who could not gain entry. The admissions process appeared arbitrary. Even for those who were successful, then, there is very little understanding of the ways in which the university assesses their ability to cope in an academic environment. This absence of formal admissions criteria is reflected in the national university context (Murphy & Inglis, 2000).

This lack of standardised and transparent entry routes for mature students is certainly one major barrier to increasing access and combatting educational disadvantage. This study, however, suggests that another, more subtle barrier exists when it comes to accessing the academy. It appears that, while mature student participation in the Irish university sector is extremely low compared to other countries, we need to be cautious in assuming that increasing access will combat educational disadvantage. The findings suggest that it would be difficult to categorise successsful mature applicants to UCD as 'educationally disadvantaged'. Increasing access, without the proper structures and proofing mechanisms in place, may have the reverse effect of excluding one sector of potential mature students, while providing another sector with a second-chance to take advantage of higher education.

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Promoting the participation of women returners in the workforce: guidelines for the design and delivery of returner courses

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Introduction and Context

This paper is based upon a two year LEONARDO[1] project, designed to address a European Commission priority of combating the exclusion of those disadvantaged in the labour market. The project involves comparative research into the effectiveness of Returner courses in enabling women to make a sustained return to paid employment. Four European countries (France, Spain, Ireland and the UK) participated in the project and one of the aims was to develop guidelines for the design, content and delivery of Returner programmes. It is these guidelines and some of the methodological and practical issues associated with conducting transnational research which constitute the focus of the paper.

Equal opportunities is a fundamental underpinning feature in the creation of European policy, and in 1987 a number of European initiatives were launched to combat exclusion and support women wishing to return to the labour market. The European Social Fund under its 'New Opportunities for Women' programme was the main funder of these initiatives and Employment NOW states that,

Women experience high rates of unemployment, account for a disproportionately large percentage of those in precarious, poorly paid or part-time employment and remain under represented in the decision-making levels in the working world.

Participation rates of women in the labour market in the four countries involved in the research show considerable variation.

Differences in Participation Rates

	1989	1996
SPAIN	29.5%	32.2%
FRANCE	50.6%	52.3%
IRELAND	33.9%	42.8%
UK	60.9%	62.3%

Table 1: European Labour Force Survey 1989-1996 (Cited in Rubery, Smith & Fagan, 1999:55)

Gemmeke (1999) suggests that the rise in labour market participation is ascribed to the decrease in the birth rate, increased participation in education and the growth of the service sector which traditionally employs women. In the UK for example, service sector employment is expected to continue to rise from 46% in 1996 to 49% in 2006 (Labour Market and Skills Trends 2000). The increase in service sector jobs and particularly the increase in the opportunities for part-time employment, which Saunders (1997:13) asserts makes it 'easier to arrange work to fit in around other commitments', has encouraged female participation in the workforce. Another factor which may account for differential participation rates has been cited by Chishom (1997). She suggests that patterns of women's working lives and the extent of state support for working mothers are shown to vary enormously across the European Community. For example, in France the practice of taking a lengthy break from paid work for child rearing is uncommon, where social policies enable women to continue paid work throughout their lives or to take breaks with guaranteed rights of return. In contrast, Irish women with children have relatively low rates of employment and social policies which locate them in the home rather than the work place. Lack of childcare provision presents one of the major barriers for women returning to training and employment. It is cited by McGivney (1993) as a domestic constraint and in addition to the psychological constraints such as a lack of confidence and structural constraints such as lack of jobs and/ or training. It is evident that if women are to be able to access training provision and participate in the labour market then these barriers must be addressed. The documented barriers/constraints informed the project aim of developing guidelines for Return to Work programmes in order that these programmes meet the needs of both women returners and employers.

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[1] LEONARDO DA VINCI is a European Community Action programme which aims to promote quality and innovation in vocational training.

The 1998 'Skill Needs in Britain' survey found that employers thought that there was a significant gap between actual and required employee skills. The most common deficiencies were computer literacy or knowledge of information technology and skills related to communication, team working and problem solving. The need for information technology skills is also cited by Rees (1995:6) in her discussion of skill shortages in the EU. She asserts that, 'the all pervasiveness of IT means that few workers will remain untouched.' Starting from the premise that these generic skills are important in terms of improving employability, the effectiveness of Return to Work programmes in developing these skills, constitutes part of the evaluation process.

The needs of women returners in relation to their access to and participation in the labour market, have been a focus for a number of other research projects in the UK. (Spencer and Taylor, 1994; McGivney, 1993; Michaels and Headlam-Wells, 1995). The data upon which their recommendations are based are derived from questionnaires and interviews with course providers and women returners. The LEONARDO research includes a similar approach, and in addition includes the perspectives of employers based in the regions where the Return to Work programmes are located. This additional perspective provides another dynamic to evaluating the effectiveness of Return to Work programmes and informs the development of the guidelines for effective practice in women's training.

Methodology

The partners in the four countries selected a short (10-16 weeks) foundation level and a longer (6-12 months) accredited Return to Work programme for evaluation. Whilst the programmes differed in terms of structure and content, all included the development of the generic skills identified above. Two differences which have, however, proved significant in the comparative analysis, relate to work placements and funding. In France, Spain and Ireland, work placements are an integral part of the programmes; in the UK they are not. Also the UK differs in terms of funding. The other three countries have government and EU funding; the UK programmes do not.

In order to elicit the perspectives of the returners, course providers and employers, questionnaires and interview schedules were designed collaboratively at our transnational meetings. These meetings provided the opportunity for mutual learning which Evans (1999:3) says requires.

> *Researchers from the national contexts to form a team which constructs the discourse from the earliest stages of the inquiry, re-interpreting research questions and objectives and their meanings in the context under investigation.*

In terms of our mutual learning, it was evident that we as researchers had come to the project with different experiences of conducting research. The French and ourselves had more experience with qualitative methods whilst the Irish and Spanish, more with the quantitative. This resulted in some interesting dialogues about the relative merits of the different research methods in relation to the project aims. It also resulted in the project manager (Jan) having to translate back and forth in English and French!

One of these aims was to compare the experiences of women on Returner courses and we discussed the value of using both questionnaires and interviews as a means of exploring them. Sue had used in-depth interviews previously in research with women returners (Smith 1996) and found them a valuable way of enabling women to tell their own stories. They provided the space to explore issues of importance to the women themselves without a pre-determined agenda. The approach opens up the possibility to explore areas, perhaps not initially considered of major significance by those conducting the research, but bring a new and important dynamic to the research findings. On this point Anderson (1990:96) says,

> *When women speak for themselves they reveal hidden realities, new experiences and new perspectives emerge…Interviews with women can explore private realms to tell us what women can explore private realms to tell us what women actually did instead of what experts thought they did or should have done.*

A major issue which emerged in the interviews was the importance of confidence building and data related to this underpinned the guidelines discussed later in the paper. Whilst we as researchers were aware of its importance, it was almost a taken for granted assumption and not an issue we had considered addressing directly, either in the interviews or the questionnaires. We learnt much about its significance through the research process.

In addition to the discussions on the use of interviews, designing the questionnaires raised the issue of reaching consensus on the structure and content of the questions. We agreed to produce some common core questions for comparative purposes with the option of including questions which were specific to the needs of the programmes in the different countries. We produced two questionnaires for the returners, one to be used at the start of the programmes and one at the end. The initial questionnaire included biographical details and was used to select a sample of ten women from each programme in each country.

The common core questions for the second questionnaire, related to the development of the generic skills, the work placement and intentions on completing the course. These were used as a starting point for the interviews, particularly the discussions of the women's views of the usefulness of courses in preparing them for employment. Another key area explored in the interviews was any potential barriers to returning to work. In addition, the women were tracked at three-month intervals after the courses had finished, to determine whether the skills and knowledge they had acquired had been useful to them in seeking and securing employment. Face to face interviews were also conducted with course providers and a questionnaire followed up by a telephone interview with local employers.

Perspectives and Guidelines

Data from the end-of-course questionnaires was analysed to determine how effective the women felt the courses had been in the development of the identified generic skills. Discussion will be limited to the longer courses as it is these that are most pertinent to the focus of the paper. The table on the next page provides an overview of the women's perspectives on the value of the courses in relation to skill development.

In terms of skill development the courses had included the elements identified as a necessary preparation for a return to employment with the exception of certain skills in the French course and the lack of a work placement in the UK course.

	UK Women into Business and Management	Spain Management and Administration	France Executive Assistants	Ireland Return to Work
Update skills	✓	✓	✓	✓
IT skills	✓	✓	✓	✓
Communication	✓	✓	✓	✓
Team work	✓	✗	✗	✓
Supervisory skills	✓	✓	✗	✓
Presentation skills	✓	✓	✓	✓
Knowledge of organisation / companies	✓	✓	✓	✓
Language of Business	✓	✓	✓	✓
Problem solving	✓	✓	✗	✓
Job seeking skills	✓	✓	✓	✓
Placements	✗	Placement 3 months per year.	2 months at the end of the course.	4 weeks at end of course.

Table 2: Value of Courses

The French course 'worked very much in a school way' and did not utilise the types of teaching and learning strategies, such as groupwork and case studies, which promoted the development of team working and problem-solving skills. The lack of a work placement was a key issue in the UK course and some disappointment was expressed by the respondents that there was no attachment to the local industry:

'I'd imagined that people would come from local industry to talk about a related topic... I don't feel there has been this relationship with local industry. It has concerned me that there isn't that sense that they are quite close to local industry'. (R7).

The work placements in the other three programmes had been very positively evaluated, particularly in France where the in-company training period enabled the trainees to build their self-confidence. One of the respondents said,

'This two-month training period gives us a chance of finding ourselves once again in a company context and gaining professional experience.'

The issue of confidence building features strongly in the interviews with the UK and French returners and it was evident that much good practice existed from which guidelines can be derived. For example, in the UK course the Communication and Presentation skills components were cited as being particularly useful in helping to build confidence. R8 for example said,

'The Communication and Presentation skills were perfect for helping my confidence. At the start I didn't have confidence. I needed to rediscover the confidence that I'd lost.... Often we were given tasks to do in terms which helped us to come out of ourselves...One part of the course was a fifteen minute presentation and at the beginning we didn't think we'd manage it but everybody did, it was wonderful.'

As the researcher responsible for collecting the data from the UK courses, I (Sue) found that all of the returners mentioned the value of the course in relation to confidence building with comments such as,

'A wonderful course. It gave me the confidence to go on to other things. Before the course my confidence was at rock bottom.' (R2).

'The course increased my confidence. It made me appreciate how many skills I had gained through my previous work and life experience.' (R6).

This finding accords with the other research on the experiences of Women Returner

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programmes. Rees (1992), cited by Summerlad and Sanders (1997:56) argues that, 'there can be no doubt about the efficiency of returner programmes in improving confidence levels.' There was one story which for me was particularly poignant in terms of the potential of courses to build confidence and change lives. 'Emma'(R7) was thirty-four, she became pregnant at sixteen and left school before taking her exams. She married at seventeen and went on to have three children. She had never been in paid employment but had set up a tenants' association and was the secretary of her son's football team. Through the course she realised that she already had a range of useful skills and an aptitude for learning. She said,

'This course has been a life-changer for me. It gave me the confidence to believe in myself and to realise that I do have something valuable to offer. If it hadn't been for the course, I would never have gone into an office. I'd be doing cleaning...I really thought that I'd messed up my life getting pregnant so young, but now I can have a career and I've got nothing stopping me.'

Guidelines for good practice in relation to confidence building and skill development are already well-documented in literature (Coats, 1996; NIACE, 1991; Morris, 1993; McGivney, 1993, Thorsen 1993). Our data corroborate these recommendations particularly with regard to the identification of barriers to training and the use of co-operative, shared and experiential teaching and learning strategies. These involve the use of team building events to develop organisational, interpersonal and problem solving skills. In addition we would include fostering an awareness of 'tacit' knowledge and skills acquired through informal learning and the provision of work placements to make the links between theory and practice.

Reflections on Conducting Transnational Research and Discussion

In reflecting upon our experience of conducting transnational research a number of aspects are worthy of consideration, and may themselves provide some guidelines, for those wishing to engage in transnational research. This research (as already stated) is based in 4 European countries (France, Ireland, Spain and the UK) and draws on experiences of working with a team who have very different experiences of conducting research.

1. Establishing the Team

The strength of the team lies in the benefits, seen by the partners, of the outcomes to their organisations. It is thus essential that the initial agreement to participate *has* the support of the managers of those organisations. Previous experience of working together has naturally great benefits as has the experience of working on transnational projects. Early meetings of partners are essential to decide the ground rules, to establish communication systems, the research programme and time scales. The partners in this collaboration brought a range of backgrounds, and this made the process of working together an enriching experience.

2. Agreeing Methodologies

The decisions involved in agreeing common research approaches has to take into account cultural diversity and differing approaches to research. Crossley and Broadfoot (1992:107) in their discussion of research problems in conducting comparative research in education, cite the potential for 'conflict or jostling of different...perspectives in the planning and conduct of research'. The approach used in this research was to agree key questions, but allow different expression, and additional questions to respond to local needs.

3. Communication

The working language of a project naturally bestows an advantage on native language speakers, and it is necessary to establish working practices which enables individuals to contribute fully. The burden of translation can fall on one member which can stifle their individual contributions. During meetings for this research, English was used as the working language but some individual responses were made in the first language and translated to enable partners not at ease with speaking English to contribute fully to the discussion.

The presentation of findings and partner reports was established at the beginning of the project, the language established and the project budget allocated funds for translation.

Timescales

As time means different things to different people and needs to take into account other individual constraints, it is essential to jointly negotiate time scales and from a management angle build in enough time for slippage, particularly when leading up to specific deadlines.

The key to conducting transnational research is to enjoy exploring different cultures and to seize the opportunity to see own practices in the light of others' viewpoints. The strength of the partnership lies in the positive commitment of the partners and their organisations, and on a personal level, an openness and interest in working transnationally.

Conducting transnational research brings with it enjoyment, stimulation, challenges and sometimes frustrations. The benefits of working in a multicultural team far outweigh any of the difficulties which are encountered. In this European funded research it provided the opportunity to explore different cultures and their approaches to the training and employment of women, and enabled the consideration of new strategies and practices in the delivery of programmes in supporting women in their return to work.

Evaluation of the diversity of approaches led to the jointly agreed guidelines in good practice for programme design; however, our recommendations for the design and delivery of Returner courses are based upon the experiences of a relatively small sample of women. This raises the question of their generalisability beyond the specific geographical and cultural contexts in which the data was collected. In addition, Crossley and Broadfoot (1992) make the important point that policies and practices cannot necessarily be translated intact from one culture to another. We would argue however that one of the values of comparative investigations of women's re-entry to the labour market lies in their potential to illuminate a reality of women's lives beyond a specific cultural context. That reality relates to the commonalities we found between the experiences of the women across the four countries. These relate to the domestic and psychological constraints referred to earlier in the paper. The guidelines for good practice provide strategies to address the psychological constraints. The domestic constraints, however, require intervention at a policy level. Pillinger (1992:165) in her discussion of women's employment in the European Community asserts that,

> *Their access to childcare, training and skilled jobs is ...constrained by policies that assume their dependence in the family, in contradiction to the economic demands for their integration.*

The project outcomes have a potential contribution to make to European equal opportunities debates and initiatives. Dissemination activities and a proposed follow-up LEONARDO project will provide opportunities to determine the efficacy of the findings.

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Education in a Uniting Society?

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It is essential in a civilised society, especially one which aspires to be a "learning" society that opportunities be made available to all who can be helped by them, not just to people who are already education-rich and can afford to pay. McGivney, p. 140.

Education has been on the political agenda in Britain for over twenty years. The focus for the Conservative government was administrative and structural reform in schools. The present Labour government has continued changes, more concerned with pupil performance, and the school as a preparation for employment in a society undergoing fundamental economic change. Changes are based on assumptions of the work-force not staying in the same job on a long-term basis. The work force is perceived as necessarily flexible and adaptable, with individuals operating at a high level of competence, enabling re-training to be satisfactorily completed alongside changes in jobs. Curiously, despite a welter of initiatives aimed at specific targets, legislative provision for rights to paid educational leave have yet to become an issue.

The twentieth century could be typified in a number of ways, one of which is the growth of education, access to which is taken as a right in any modern democracy. Globally, it is a stated aim that all children should have access to primary education by 2015.

In Britain, the outcome of this expansion of education was questioned in the last twenty years of the century in terms of student achievement. Many years in school did not, apparently, guarantee a predictable level of education. The Adult Literacy Campaign of the 1970's found disturbing levels of poor literacy. The presumed target number was two million adults, 'But if the population at risk is taken to be that enhanced range of ability levels displayed by actual students (including the competent readers and writers with chronic spelling problems) then it may well be much larger than two million', (Charnley & Jones, p. 23.)

Alongside literacy problems, others emerged, mainly mathematical, and basic education became a matter of concern. There was some debate on definitional problems, but the ACACE report on a 'Strategy for the Basic Education of Adults', referred to areas of 'deprivation' which are 'literally incalculable, for we are considering a hidden and largely defeated population whom life has taught to keep their heads down and not expect much.' The report went on to conclude that, 'The evidence we have received is overwhelming and we give grounds...for estimating the total as being more than 3 million.' (ACACE, paragraph 4, p.9.)

The socially deprived who saw no benefit in obtaining education were a group most difficult to reach and motivate. Lawrence Stone suggests an historical inheritance.

'Up to the second half of the nineteenth century, there were in Europe at least five different educational levels, each of which was geared to the needs and aspirations of a different social class. The first...provided the most elementary form of literacy, namely the capacity to read a little and to sign one's name which was the most the poor could aspire to.' (Stone,1969, p.69).

With the invention of printing, and the availability of Bibles, 'It made more sense for the common people to acquire the art of reading after the end of the fifteenth century' (Cipolla, 1969, p.50). Nevertheless, despite the church providing more schools 'the reader will be shocked to learn that as late as 1850 about half the adult population in Europe could neither read nor write' (Cipolla, 1969, p.55).

Enthusiasm and keenness to attend schools was limited.

'Indeed, neither teachers nor parents seem to consider learning as their principal object in sending children to schools, but generally say that they go there in order to be taken care of, and to be out of the way.' (Cipolla, 1969, p.35, quoting a Manchester Statistical Society Report, Parliamentary Papers VII (1838), p.868).

Recognising that matters may not have changed all that much as regards attitudes, Charnley and Jones state 'the problems are human, cultural and moral as much as technical or economic' (p.15). The legacy of earlier times appears to be that there is a great backlog of under-achievement, which the present Government is attempting to overcome.

A recent prophet has been Sir Claus Moser, a former Head of the Government Statistical Service, and a critic of the education system as a whole.

In August 1990, in a Presidential address to the Association for the Advancement of Science, entitled 'Our Need for an Informed Society', Sir Claus criticised British education:

'the most unacceptable feature of education is the fact that the majority of children leave full-time education at 16. Of those aged 16-18 some 40 per cent are in full-time education, the lowest of any advanced country. Compare this figure with 79 per cent in the USA, 77 per cent in Japan, 66 per cent in Sweden...Note also that in 1988, eight per cent of the 16 year-olds were unemployed.' (Moser, p.15).

Many other depressing statistics were cited to the extent that

'wherever you touch our education system, serious deficiencies undermining the future of children and the country emerge. Yet Britain's future depends more than ever on its human resources, and the quality of these resources obviously depends on education.' (Moser, p.21)

Sir Claus called for a Royal Commission or National Committee on education, the outcome was a National Commission on Education, of which Sir Claus was a member, and which issued a Report, 'Learning to Succeed', in 1993. This extended the critique of Moser to a more detailed level.

Peter Townsend's huge survey on poverty remarked 'Any preliminary outline of available evidence about poverty must include evidence about inequality.' (p.43.) Accepting a measure of positive relationship between education and earning raises the issue of access to education, or inclusion in a social as well as an economic sense. It is certainly an aim of the present Government to provide opportunities – for work, for education and for training.

This is against a background that may not be ideal. Townsend found

'the top 10 per cent took 26 per cent of aggregate income, and the bottom 80 per cent only 59 per cent. Assets were distributed more unequally, with the top 5 per cent owning 45 per cent of assets (ie net assets) and the bottom 80 per cent only 24 per cent, despite a wide definition of assets which included owner occupied housing, (p.367). Further examination of the rich and the poor indicated that 'the top 10 per cent have an advantage which is nearly ten times that of the poorest 10 per cent. The reader should note that the 1968-9 values quoted more than trebled by the late 1970's'. (p.368).

The Government's Social Exclusion Unit report for July 1999, 'a snapshot at the end of 1997' (Summary p.1, footnote), endorsed the pessimistic review with many facts and figures. Briefly,

'This report explains why so many of this country's young people – at any one time…9 per cent of the age group – are outside education, training and work for long periods…and why it matters that they are.' (Summary, para. 1)

The report proposes a structure that will be

'socially inclusive…end much of the institutional fragmentation…use financial and other incentives…and give new recognition to volunteering and other kinds of currently under-acknowledged achievement by young people' (para.24).

It is against this background that the Government has launched its education reforms in the last three years. These include publications on the learning age (focussed on lifelong learning, learning to succeed, and culture (that is a culture of education and creativity). Running alongside these, as it were, is the literacy and numeracy working group's efforts, led by Sir Claus Moser who suggests numbers of adults with problems are now very high:

'Roughly 20% of adults – that is perhaps as many as 7 million people – have more or less severe problems with basic skills in particular what is generally called "functional literacy" and "functional numeracy": The ability to read, write and speak in English, and to use mathematics at a level necessary to function at work and in society in general.' (A Fresh Start, p.2.)

The implication is that many are excluded from opportunities in society by the operating effect of the education system as a divider or barrier or selector through which only so many can pass. A system based on failure, not on success; since hitherto most concern, interest and resource-provision has been focussed on those selected, and therefore 'succeeding', not on those 'selected out'.

Present Government policy appears to be an attempt to expand selection and incorporate as many as possible into a well-trained and well-educated work force, and certainly more than has so far been the case. The commitment to education has an economic edge, and the wish to break down the division between the well- and the ill-educated has brought the overarching systemic concept of 'the learning age'.

The National Commission on Education's Report seems to have had some influence. Its vision of seven major areas indicated the future to which it aspired. The Commission's vision for the future of education and training, (p.43), was based upon seven principles, two of which are recorded here:

1: *'In all countries **knowledge and applied intelligence** have become central to economic success and personal and social well-being.'*

7: *'It is the role of education **both** to interpret and pass on the values of society **and** to stimulate people to think for themselves and to change the world around them.'*

It is tempting to read aspects of Government policy into some of the principles. The ubiquitous Sir Claus Moser chaired a working party on 'Improving Numeracy and Literacy' which reported in 1999, with 21 recommendations and an Implementation Plan to move matters forward. The present Government has certainly acted with zeal in presenting areas of policy. Given that, for economic purposes, education is the major priority, it has reinvigorated the national education debate with a tide of publications.

An early generic paper, 'The Learning Age' (Cm.3790) had a useful sub-title: 'a renaissance for a new Britain' focussed on economic concerns as generator of educational reform.

'Since the 1960's employment in manufacturing has fallen from one in three of the workforce to under one in five. This has been mirrored by a huge rise in jobs in services which now account for over two-thirds of all workers, more people today work in film and television than in car manufacturing. There are three million self-employed and 6.5 million part-time workers, and women make up nearly half the workforce compared with less than a third 50 years ago' (para.2, p.9).

From a similar, but slightly different angle Professor Ken Robinson, chairman of the National Advisory Committee for Creative and Cultural Education, summarised the position thus:

'Our present system was designed to meet the needs of the industrial economy when the workforce consisted roughly of 80 per cent manual and 20 per cent professional and clerical staff. Our underlying systems of selection, assessment and qualifications are rooted in this model' (The Times, 16 July 1999).

Sadly, the report produced by his Committee was, following its terms of reference, school-focussed in making 'recommendations on the creative and cultural development of young people through formal and informal education…to the age of 16' though it did include 'recommendation for a wider national strategy for creative and cultural education', (All Our Futures, p.4).

This cultural apathy towards education was the situation the Government saw itself facing. The solution it defined as: 'The information and knowledge-based revolution of the twenty-first century will be built on a very different foundation' (from the Industrial Revolution) '-investment in the intellect and creativity of people. The micro-chip and fibre optic cable of today are what electricity and the steam engine were to the nineteenth century' (para. 4, p.9.)

The focus of the document is the individual adult, and what provision existed or what opportunities could be made available. Numbers involved, or percentages were quoted which suggested participation as such, was not a problem.

'About two thirds of higher education students are mature students. Indeed, the number of mature entrants now exceeds the number of 18 to 21 year olds starting in higher education…Students from less affluent family backgrounds continue to be under-represented in higher education.' (p.77.)

This is certainly regrettable but perhaps not surprising, since previous expansion in higher education following reports such as those of the Robbins Committee in 1963 have tended to make little impact on the social composition of the student cohort. Indeed, Robbins, remarked one commentator, producing

'the most thorough statistics yet of the kind of student who goes to university or college…demonstrates, beyond any doubt, that vast numbers of very talented working-class children fail to come through our system…despite all the recent expansion and feeling of opportunity, the proportion of working class boys at university is no greater now than it was before the 1939-45 war.'
(Jackson and Marsden, pp. 248-9.)

This is the legacy of exclusion that has to be tackled in building a society of people committed, individually, to learning.

In the further education sector,

'there are '3.8 million students…1 million…on full-time courses, 900,000 on part-time evening only courses.' (CM 3790, p.77.)

With the Kennedy report to build on, the 'Learning to Succeed' publications carry forward policy in the further education on 16-19 area.

In his foreward to the latter, subtitled 'a new framework for post 16 learning' the Secretary of State writes of the importance of a

'*love for learning...to ensure the means by which our economy can make a successful transition from the industries and services of the past, to the knowledge and information economy of the future. It...contributes to sustaining civilised and cohesive society, in which people develop as active citizens and in which generational disadvantage can be overcome.*' (p.3.)

The disadvantages recognised in the Learning Age were familiar enough, but no easier to surmount for that. 'We need to understand better the obstacles people face. Among the most commonly cited are time, cost, fear, inadequate information, complexity and inconvenience.' (Cm 3790. para. 1.4, p.17.)

The vision of the Learning Age (para. 25, p.13) is repeated in Learning to Succeed (Executive Summary, p.6).

'*investing in learning to benefit everyone; lifting barriers to learning; sharing responsibility with employers, employees and the community: achieving world class standards and value for money; and working together as the key to success.*

The first White Paper of the new Government in 1997, 'Excellence in Schools', was school-focussed, but, in his Foreword, the Secretary of State took an inclusive approach.

'*Partnership for change means commitment from everyone: from the family and the wider community; from those working in the education service; and from those who support it, even voluntarily...We must replace the culture of complacency with commitment to success.*' (p.3.)

This could be seen as a list of criteria by which to judge the Government's efforts. Certainly, many initiatives have appeared, and a plethora of publications. The Government in its annual report 98/99 re-iterated its commitment 'Education is the Government's first priority...This means reforms, greater investment and a total dedication to raising standards' (p.8.)

The finesse of the computer key has changed, reduced or eliminated many jobs, and looks set to continue to do so. Many of those not working, or retired, while denied the benefit of familiarity of networking in an Information Technological world, will need to inform themselves if they are to remain part of a society in which they can function on equal terms with everyone else. One response is the National Grid for Learning at school level.

Just as the aim of fifty per cent of the age cohort attending higher education, while raising queries about quality provision and standards of performance, also tends to assume that employment of a suitable nature exists (that is justifying an additional three years of study, and not regarding it merely as in itself good). This also implies a necessary role for the fifty per cent not continuing into higher education.

Are those to move to further education and prepare for their economic future there? A possible answer, from 'Learning to Succeed', may lie in the Learning and Skills Councils proposed there (chapter 3). Their 'remit will include further education, community and adult learning, work-based training for younger people, workforce development, and information, advice, guidance and support for adults' (para. 3.2, p.23.)

The setting up of the Council is described in some detail, but the most significant aspect is the creation, by the Council, and through which it will operate, of 'a network of 40-50 local Learning and Skills Councils, to ensure we achieve the right blend of provision needed for local areas.' (para. 3.20, p.27.)

A 'Transition Plan' covering local delivery of support to small firms has a monthly diary from 30 June 1999 to April 2001 for areas of interests, which include workbased learning for adults, Training and Enterprise Councils, school sixth forms, the absorption of the National Council for Education and Training Targets – and the transfer of the National Learning Targets – by April 2001, Partnership in Lifelong Learning, a new inspectorate, the winding up of and transfer of assets to the Council of the Further Education Funding Council (by March 2001), responsibility of provision of Adult and Community education transferred from local authorities to the Council (by April 2001) with programmes delivered through the local learning council outlets, and similarly for young people, 'providing a comprehensive structure for advice and support for young people, aged 13 to 19 years' (p.12) by April, 2001, and setting up a small business service. All this, while the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is setting itself up, with all this 'dependent upon parliament passing the appropriate legislation', and the information above being seen as 'an illustrative time-table' (footnote, p.9).

Will the tide of reform and change achieve an IT literate society and create a culture of lifelong learning? There are many longstanding barriers to overcome. Very recent figures suggest that recruitment in further education is sliding: 'annual enrolment figures showed a decrease in total student numbers of 0.3% in further education colleges between November 1998 and November 1999' (Guardian Education 25 April 2000, p.35), a drop for a second year, the first time this has occurred for over 20 years.

Is the opportunity for lifelong learning attractive?

Attitudes finally decide:

'the prospect of lifelong learning may be interpreted as more of a burden, as more akin to a lifelong sentence than an invitation to personal growth and development.' Coffield 1997, p.87 quoted in McGivney, p.138.

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Inclusion and employment: the influence of small and medium-sized enterprises on the learning activities of their employees.

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Introduction.

This paper investigates the role played by employment in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)[1] on the learning activities of employees. SMEs are noted for their diversity, and while there are exceptions, vocational education and training (VET) levels in SMEs are lower than those in larger companies. Furthermore, many SME owner/managers place a much higher value on their employees acquiring skills and competencies rather than on gaining qualifications. Indeed, many would rather recruit new workers than invest in training for existing employees.[2] Thus the question may be posed: are employees in SMEs effectively being excluded from access to learning because of their employment in such firms? In 1998 SMEs provided employment for 43.6 per cent of the United Kingdom (UK) workforce.[3] This proportion is more likely to increase than to decline. Therefore, this is an important question in regard to debates about inclusion and adult education, not least because of the Government's purportedly equal emphasis on economic competitiveness and social inclusion in its lifelong learning agenda.[4] It is an issue which extends beyond the provision of VET. There has been increasing recognition that informal and experiential learning constitutes an important element in gaining knowledge and skills. This has recently begun to be investigated in the context of the influence of the workplace.[5] However, to date there has been little qualitative research on these issues in general, let alone in relation to SMEs.

The paper is based primarily on qualitative research which investigates aspects of learning in SMEs involved in manufacturing in South Yorkshire. Four firms of 80-120 employees formed the core of the sample, with additional information from another six enterprises. All except one are involved in metalworking, which gives a degree of sectoral uniformity along with geographic homogeneity. Data is provided through over thirty in-depth interviews with both managerial and non-managerial staff, plus observational work, brief questionnaires and telephone conversations. Wherever possible, equal weight has been accorded the views of managers and employees, regardless of grade.

There are a number of issues to be addressed: does the experience of work in SMEs discourage learning activities? What is the value placed on formal vis-à-vis informal learning by both employers and employees, and to what extent is this related to notions of rewards and employability? Do SMEs lack a 'learning culture'? What is the impact of job insecurity on the motivations and strategies of learning by employees in SMEs? The paper provides a brief overview of these issues, which will be explored in greater depth in subsequent papers.

The experience of work in SMEs.

Small may be beautiful in certain contexts but surveys indicate that this is not always readily apparent for employees of SMEs. While one may have a more personalised and potentially more harmonious relationship with one's manager/owner, there appear to be few other obvious benefits. In general, SMEs train less, promote less, pay less, and are more likely to go bust than larger companies. The experience of work in SMEs may sometimes be fulfilling in terms of variety, but is frequently subject to considerable insecurity. Furthermore, SMEs are not noted for their adoption of human resource development (HRD) strategies.[6] In the sample, few lower grade employees have experiences which might promote feelings of commitment or loyalty to their enterprise. If anything, their experiences and perceptions of the value placed on their learning have inclined them towards suspicion and alienation. Wider learning initiatives seemingly have not had a major impact. Indeed, few respondents, almost regardless of grade, were aware of any Government initiatives concerning lifelong learning.

However, in certain important respects, there is a striking contrast between the views expressed by owner/managers and higher grade supervisory staff compared with lower grade employees. For instance, while the majority of all grades gave a positive response to, 'do you think that your job encourages you to learn?', major differences became apparent in response to the follow-up question, 'do you think that your workplace encourages you to learn?' Most owner/managers and higher grade employees responded fairly positively, but almost universally, lower grade employees responded negatively. This is especially important given that these companies tended to be more positively inclined towards VET and HRD than the mainstream. Indeed, it would be inaccurate to portray the vast majority of the firms in question as either hostile or apathetic towards staff development: many were strongly committed, albeit subject to limited resources. Indeed, some managers felt constrained by what they regarded as the negative attitudes of their workforce – particularly lower grade employees who did not wish to participate in any out-of-hours activities – whom they saw as resistant to change and lacking commitment.

Yet, the research revealed that very many employees regard their employers and their employment in a negative light in relation both to learning opportunities and recognition of learning – be it in terms of remuneration, satisfaction or security. The general perception is that learning beyond what is narrowly required by their job is under-valued. If this is the perception in these firms, is not the position likely to be worse in those that did not respond?

Moreover, owner/managers are forthright in stating that their prime concern is with production and profitability: the personal development of their employees is a secondary issue. Most view the development of their employees in a wider sense as beyond their remit. This does not mean that they do not profess to value the learning of their workforces. All do so, but within the confines of their particular enterprise. Rarely was there any perception that learning acquired outside of work should be formally recognised within the workplace. Rarer still was there any perception of a wider, societal role for workplace learning. Restricted views such as these help to perpetuate both the alienation of many employees and the perception that work- and society-related learning are separate, and that the latter is of much lesser value than the former. Although these views were regarded sometimes with frustration by a number of employees, the majority shared such an outlook. Many employees did not recognise the role of non-work-related learning in work-related activities until this was discussed fully during the interviews. Some activities were more obvious than others, but many learning activities were not recognised, and to a considerable extent this was because they were not formally acknowledged by employers.

In effect, lack of recognition constituted a major barrier to learning activities, leading to a perception that learning is neither fully appreciated nor rewarded. There is, of course, the usual imperative to perform one's job tasks adequately and competently. Nevertheless, the usual barriers to learning[7] seem to be even more important if one works for an SME, which has less capacity for recognising and rewarding learning due to its sparser resources, lack of promotion opportunities and lower pay scales compared with larger firms. The impact of this is still greater if the SME concerned is disinclined to formally recognise and reward learning.

Informal and formal learning: rewards and employability.

Informal learning was defined by interviewees as observing, talking, listening and actually carrying out the job with both peers and more experienced colleagues; some included introductory briefings by outside contractors, and conversations with friends. Trial and error, though sometimes expensive, was seen as important. Such views cut across different grades. All agreed that informal learning was very important and that it *should* be valued. Evidence indicates that informal learning is crucial to the operation of SMEs in the metalworking sector. Moreover, there are areas of steel production where informal learning is the only method of skill/competence acquisition: there are very few formal qualifications for such jobs. Most steelworkers are employed in jobs which are designated semi- or unskilled, yet which require long-term practice to achieve competency. However, they are not usually regarded as transferable skills, and rarely are recognised by other (non-steel) companies. Herein lies a major problem regarding informal learning: is it recognised, and if so, how? For most SME employees, it is not fully recognised, even if the firm has adopted an integrated appraisal system.

All sample firms had adopted some type of formal appraisal system – often called a skills matrix - though there were considerable variations. In the cases of two core firms and one 'peripheral' firm, this was centred on attaining/retaining Investors in People (IiP) status. Motivation for this was a mixture of genuine concern for the workforce's morale, the opportunity to introduce more rationalised appraisal systems and to train supervisors, and good publicity. Regular, personalised appraisal systems supposedly are central to IiP status. Such systems should, in theory, include all the learning activities and acquisition of skills by each individual, both in present and past employment. The more sensitive systems should allow for learning and skills acquired outside of a working context, such as organising a charity event, teaching oneself a computer programme or whatever. While some systems do allow for this, none of those operated by any sample firms did so. On the other hand, they did permit the inclusion of competencies acquired through work and therefore did purport to recognise the value of such learning. However, the recognition of such learning often was used in a negative sense. Appraisal systems were used overtly to determine redundancies by some managers. That is, the least 'multi-skilled' were the first to be dismissed. This was known by most employees, and the most vulnerable consequently viewed the systems with hostility or at best, suspicion. Some did consider that such systems have, potentially, positive features; but these tended to be outweighed by the negative aspects. These attitudes may be due partly to the general decline of metalworking industries in South Yorkshire. Interestingly, though, the take-up of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) is almost non-existent among the sample. NVQs are supposed to appraise all forms of learning in a system which permits assessment of transferable skills. Very low take-up may be due to the lack of appropriate NVQs for the industry. It certainly reflects poor publicity for NVQs: most managers and many employees were negative in their responses. Nevertheless, it is significant that SMEs in an industry which often lacks formal qualifications should be so wholly lacking in NVQ take-up. The question remains of how best to formally assess transferable skills.

Do SMEs lack a 'learning culture'?

SMEs in the sample and in general do lack such a culture. This is particularly obvious among lower grade employees. Among the sample there were no systematic attempts to establish a 'learning organisation'. There were attempts among the majority to implement teamworking practices and to engage in multi-skilling, but these were rarely systematic, and the main motive was greater control of the labour process. There was rarely any self-appraisal, and little trade union involvement. The application of these aspects had in some cases been ongoing for a decade or more, but apart from teamworking there had been few serious efforts to improve internal communications. Feedback systems remain partial and haphazard. This is particularly important because it leads to missed opportunities, poor communication and low commitment in general. Experience and informal learning consequently is perceived by employees to be under-valued in terms of tangible rewards. Such attitudes are most prevalent among the more vulnerable sections of the workforce. This assessment is in spite of the achievement or retention of IiP status by two of the core firms in the sample during the period of the research, and the operation of an Employee Development Scheme (EDS) by one of those firms.

Indeed, the EDS of one company is informative. Introduced some two years ago the company offers £100 per year for employees to undertake learning activities, with no stipulation that they must be work-related. Yet, only a fifth of employees typically take up the offer, and the majority of these are non-manual employees. There are a number of reasons for this. Primarily it is the long working day, the physical exertion required, and in many cases shiftwork, which inclines most production workers against taking up the offer. There is also suspicion of 'hidden agendas'. Indeed, management's rationale for maintaining the scheme is also revealing. It was never viewed as a method for encouraging a 'learning culture'. It is seen mainly as a 'perk'. It is not seen as a means by which production and profitability is enhanced. It stems primarily from the owner's personal religious convictions. He viewed the scheme as a public duty, and as demonstrating commitment to his workforce. Any benefits were seen in terms of boosting general workforce morale. Only one interviewee at this firm had taken up the EDS. Not all were fully aware of it, despite team meetings. Consequently, it seems that the partial introduction of 'new' management structures had led to partial dissemination of information and, more importantly, incomplete encouragement of learning practices which were not directly related to the performance of job tasks. This is important, because this was probably the most advanced firm in such terms. Furthermore, the firm had adopted this practice without trade union involvement or pressure. It had initially been adopted with part-funding by the local Training and Enterprise Council, but the company had continued the scheme after the withdrawal of such aid. A few other firms had considered EDS, but none had implemented it, arguing that there were no discernible benefits – indeed, similar arguments were raised against IiP by some firms. Hardly any employees in other firms had even heard of EDS. Therefore it is significant that neither management nor employees viewed EDS as a major component of industrial relations or of staff development. This latter aspect does not accord with research carried out on EDS in 1997, which apparently had quite positive results and optimistic conclusions.[8]

Job insecurity.

The experience of work in any sample of SMEs is, naturally, conditioned by the broader economic climate affecting that particular industrial sector. Thus, for metalworking industries in South Yorkshire this has been one of both relative and absolute decline. Consequently, at the forefront of many people's considerations is the threat of unemployment, and the necessity for multi-skilling and re-training. Thus, in response to questions as to whether job insecurity encouraged or discouraged learning activities, the majority responded that it did indeed do so, in order to increase employability. For many in this sector this was a prominent question with a particular resonance: many did not have obviously transferable skills. Indeed, among middle-aged, male steelworkers this is an increasingly critical issue. Many felt obliged to return to formal learning in the face of potential redundancy. Few had expected to do so. Workplace learning in most steel occupations consists of informal, situated learning; for the majority it consists of acquiring skills through length of service: through doing the job.

However, most respondents considered that *chronic* job insecurity acted as a disincentive to learning activities: 'what's the point?' Again, this is very important in a declining industrial sector. Moreover, respondents tended to distinguish between job security and job satisfaction. While the generalised lack of the former was regarded as inclining or driving people towards learning activities, the lack of the latter was seen as working against learning activities: it discouraged commitment. This is an important question. On the one hand a certain degree of job insecurity may encourage some learning activities; on the other, lack of job satisfaction or interest may discourage it. Few interviewees perceived a dichotomy between the two responses, which may be indicative of more general attitudes. None of the companies seemed to operate a systematic 'core and periphery' policy towards their employees – indeed, there was a remarkably low turnover of personnel - yet in practice most lower grade employees had attitudes associated with such firms: they expected to be made redundant sooner or later. This has a disorientating and demoralising effect, and increases the perception of exclusion.

Conclusion.

In general employees of SMEs experience fewer opportunities for formal learning than their counterparts in larger firms, and this constitutes a form of exclusion. All respondents pointed towards lack of resources. Such exclusion is not necessarily due to overt hostility towards formal learning activities, but it may have a cumulative effect when other barriers to learning are also taken into account. However, in many SMEs informal learning thrives, and this tends to be formally recognised more - albeit still inadequately - in those firms that have adopted at least partially measures of HRD theory: particularly appraisal systems. Nevertheless, in general employees feel that informal, workplace learning is insufficiently recognised, valued and rewarded, and they adapt their strategies for learning accordingly: often in the protection of certain rare skills and experience, and in pursuing learning which will enhance employability. Information and communication technology skills are prominent in this respect. Nevertheless, rarely if ever did it encourage learning in a wider sense.

There are further disjunctures. Even among firms that recognise formal learning and profess a commitment to and appreciation of informal learning, in practice this is seldom done in a manner which actively encourages employees to engage in learning activities: greater remuneration, security, promotion, self-respect and job satisfaction. Few managers placed much emphasis on formal qualifications. Learning generally is undertaken at the initiative of the employee concerned, and maintained by the commitment of the individual. This is all very well for some employees, and sometimes is sufficient for many higher grade workers, but it neither encourages commitment to the firm among lower grade employees, nor encourages learning activities in general. It does contribute further to an already generally dispirited industrial sector. Consequently, discussions of inclusion, employment and lifelong learning need to take into account the HRD practices of enterprises both in general and in different industrial and geographic sectors. Among SMEs these appear to be poor, but there are immense opportunities for improvement. A key factor is a demonstrable commitment by employers towards employees through greater recognition of learning.

[1] That is, companies of less than 250 employees, with an annual turnover of under £26 million.

[2] Atkinson J and Meager N (1994), 'Running to stand still: the small firm and the labour market', in Atkinson J and Storey D (eds) *Employment, the Small Firm and the Labour Market*, London, Routledge. Beta Technology Limited (1994), 'Identifying and Satisfying the Skills Required of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises', Sheffield. Hendry C, Jones A, Arthur M and Pettigrew C (1991), *Human Resource Development in Small to Medium Sized Enterprises*, London, Department of Employment. Hyland T and Matlay H (1998), 'Lifelong learning and the "New Deal" vocationalism: vocational training, qualifications and the small business sector', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 46, 4, pp.399-414. Matlay H and Hyland T (1997), 'NVQs in the small business sector: a critical overview', *Education and Training*, 39, 9, pp.325-332. Storey D (1994), *Understanding the Small Business Sector*, London, Routledge. Storey D and Westhead P (1997), 'Management training in small firms - a case of market failure?' *Human Resource Management Journal*, 37, 2, pp.61-71.

[3] Department of Trade and Industry (1999), 'SME Statistics for the UK, 1998', London. This figure excludes self-employed people.

[4] See the White Paper (1999), Learning to Succeed: A New Framework for Post-16 Education, London; Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (1999), The Learning Age: The Response, London; and DfEE (1999), The Learning and Skills Council Prospectus, London. However, there is **much** more emphasis on competitiveness than inclusion.

[5] Boud D and Garrick J (eds) (1999), *Understanding Learning at Work*, London, Routledge. Dale M and Bell J (1999), *Informal Learning in the Workplace*, London, DfEE. Garrick J (1998), *Informal Learning in the Workplace*, London, Routledge. Usher R and Solomon N (1999), 'Experiential learning and the shaping of subjectivity in the workplace', *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 31, 2, pp.155-163. Watkins K and Marsick V (1992), 'Towards a theory of informal and incidental learning in organisations', *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 11, 4, pp.287-300.

[6] Creagh M (1999), 'Training for SMEs', *Management Focus*, 13, pp.17-19. Duberley J and Walley P (1995), 'Assessing the adoption of HRM by small and medium-sized manufacturing organisations', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 6, 4, pp.891-909. Matlay H (1997), 'The paradox of training in the small business sector of the British economy', *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 49, 4, pp.573-589. Nelder G and Skandalakis A (1999), 'Benchmarking as the gateway to knowledge transfer for SMEs', *Industry and Higher Education*, October, pp.342-348. Osborne M, Seagraves L, Neal P and Dockrell R (1995), *Learning in Small Companies: Interim Report*, Stirling, Stirling University. Vinten G (1998), 'Skills shortage and recruitment in the SME sector', *Development International*, 3, 6, pp.238-242. See also endnote two.

[7] Storey and Westhead, *op. cit.*, list some barriers to learning in SMEs. There is a brief overview of broader attitudes in Beinart S and Smith P (1998), *National Adult Learning Survey 1997: summary*, London, DfEE. Detailed discussions of

wider barriers are in McGivney V (1990), *Education's for Other People: access to education for non-participant adults*, Leicester, NIACE, and (1993) *Women, Education and Training: barriers to access, informal starting points and progression routes*, Leicester, NIACE, and Boud D and Griffin V (eds) (1987), *Appreciating Adults Learning: from the learners' perspective*, London, Kogan Page.

[8] Firth D and Goffey L (1997), 'EDS: the benefits of participation for employees of small firms', London, DfEE Research Brief 39, pp.1-5.

'We're not the only ones learning here'-- an investigation of co-tutoring and the dynamics of power within a class of adult dyslexics.

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Introduction: the research context

'*We're not the only ones learning here*': this quotation was taken from the learning diary of one of the students on the very first Learning for life and work course and records his surprise, and I think, delight, as he realised that the tutors were learners too. As experienced adult educators we are used to the idea that the adults we teach can, and do, contribute much of the teaching that goes on in the classroom. And many of our experienced adult students are also accustomed to this. However, when the classes are 'targeted at disadvantaged groups'(HEFCE, 1995) who are mostly new to adult classes, it is important to question what effect this perception has; particularly when their previous educational experiences have been teacher dominated and, generally speaking, far from happy.[1] When, to quote one student, 'after a while at school, I came to believe it. Came to believe what my teachers were telling me, that I was thick and useless.' Another said, 'the attitude I got from the teachers was that it wasn't worth me trying' and a third commented: 'they know best, they're the teachers…'

As a group, people with disabilities are under-represented in higher education institutes and these students, describing their exclusion from education during their school years, are all dyslexic adults. They took part in a series of non-accredited courses organised by the University of Nottingham as part of a project funded by HEFCE which aimed to encourage participation in higher education by providing 'privileged' access for groups of people with disabilities. The classes under investigation in this essay were adapted specifically for dyslexic students from a study skills course typical to those taken by mature students planning to go on to university. In a deliberate attempt to remove barriers to participation the courses were all open access and free of charge; the only criteria for admission was that putative students must have a disability and in most of the groups the disability was similar. Thus the students were invited to work within 'discrete' groups, without the anxieties they might otherwise feel as the only disabled student in the classroom.

This was very significant: we need to bear in mind that Rocco and West (1998, 174) identify disability as the foremost among eight categories for discrimination and that other research by Johnston-Bailey and Cervero (1998) demonstrates that the adult classroom is a microcosm of the real world, mirroring its power struggles. Therefore we cannot always assume that the usual adult classroom will offer an appropriate environment for disabled students. Here, because of the specific funding, we were able to create a different environment where the students could find a safe haven. Dale and Green (1998) have dubbed this type of provision --a course provided exclusively for students with disabilities --'exclusive provision' and, using evidence from this and other courses within the same programme, have argued that the students feel secure in a classroom with other people who share their disability.

Even with 'exclusive provision' alone we have gone some way towards creating a parallel universe where, instead of the disabled student being the odd one out it is the able-bodied tutor who is 'different', thus subtly altering the dynamics of power within the classroom. Once they are the majority within the classroom, the disabled students potentially can set the agenda without fear of preventing the non-disabled students from making progress (Ash, 1997). However in the majority of the Learning for life and work courses, which were a joint venture between Nottingham University and the Nottinghamshire Dyslexia Association, we added another unusual feature--instead of having one tutor there were two, one from the university and one from the Dyslexia Association. Significantly, one of the tutors was also dyslexic.

This paper investigates the effects of these two dramatic changes, exclusivity and co-tutoring, in the adult classroom by using the themes of **mastery, voice, authority and positionality** found in previous research on classroom power dynamics by both Maher and Tetreault (1994) and Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998). The themes are defined as:

> **Mastery**: in the educational setting refers to understanding the material covered in the course and amassing individual or collaborative knowledge.
> **Voice**: refers to the students' ability to speak and more importantly to their degree of comfort in speaking.
> **Authority**: refers to the examination of the traditional concept of the teacher as the power figure and the students as the governed.
> **Positionality**: refers to the place one occupies within the societal hierarchy and is usually defined by the major categories of gender, class, sexual orientation or disability (Johnson-Bailey and Cervero, 1998).

The research material is drawn from the transcription of three lengthy focus group meetings with seven of the students, together with the personal learning journals and statements of learning of the wider student group, also from tutor journals and lesson plans as well as classroom observation. It therefore permits us to hear both the tutors' reflections and the students' own voices.

Mastery

> understanding the material covered in the course and amassing individual or collaborative knowledge.

In the context of this course there were two different areas of knowledge where the students were required to gain mastery; one of these was an awareness of the demands that future study would make upon them and a range of techniques that would enable them cope with these demands. The other area of knowledge was of dyslexia itself and specific strategies for dyslexic students. Both tutors were convinced that knowledge about dyslexia and how it affected them as individuals was as important for the students as the techniques of study. Although the tutor from the Dyslexia Association was used to working with dyslexic school students and teaching them study skills, she had little experience of these skills in higher education while the other tutor had considerable experience in working with adults in this field. However she had less knowledge of the second area of expertise, dyslexia; thus both tutors were interdependent.

The practical implication of this for the classroom situation was that teaching sessions were shared, with the different tutors contributing their particular area of knowledge. Thus the major part of the first session of each course was taken by the dyslexic tutor who gave a presentation explaining the history of our growing understanding of dyslexia and the ways in which it affected people. During this same session, the other tutor, myself, presented the outline of the course and negotiated what we would cover with the students. Therefore from the outset, the **mastery** of the material was perceived to be shared: one tutor knew about dyslexia, the other knew about the demands of the university.

This pattern was repeated throughout the courses with the tutors taking turn and turn about to present material, one taking centre stage at the front of the class while the other sat alongside the students. Sometimes the 'spare' tutor worked with the students, responding to individual needs for clarification or acting as a scribe and at other times she openly learned a new technique from the other. We had deliberately adopted a multi-sensory teaching approach, wherever possible, and provided the formal teaching through visual materials, handouts containing both verbal and diagrammatic information, which were read aloud to the students and the strategies they described were demonstrated so that the process could be followed. Sometimes the 'teacher' would be aware of the students' anxiety--at times their panic was palpable--and, having exhausted her own attempts to find an explanation which they could follow, would appeal to the other for help. The students remarked on this: 'You kept saying help to each other, didn't you?'. But they found it useful:

I think it made it easier, it did for me anyway, to understand what you were saying, Barbara. I was taking it in, because I'd got that panic, I don't quite understand but, look at Vanessa's face or ask Vanessa to put it in a way I can understand it....if you like Vanessa was our interpreter, not that you were hard to understand, don't get me wrong, but it's just that sort of thing, it works, having both, getting the information we've come for off that part of the course and Vanessa is there to sort of say, yes, I know what you mean, it's done this way. (Suzanne, 1st focus group)

The active teaching role would thus pass back and forward between the tutors as they sought for the best way to convey the information. Importantly, this device defused the potential tension in the situation and allowed the tutors to assume responsibility for the students' lack of understanding. In addition, as one or other of the tutors was generally seated amongst the students, we all became accustomed to hearing a teaching voice issue from the student group.

As the courses were repeated several times, responsibility for a specific part of the teaching would move from one tutor to the other. For example, in one session I was demonstrating a mapping technique which my partner had taught in the previous course but she interrupted to correct me as I had mis-remembered a significant detail of the layout. The ease with which one tutor could point out the other's mistake and the other accept the correction was an important part of the teaching process demonstrating that the tutors can make mistakes and learn from them without embarrassment. This was particularly significant for a group of students who were accustomed to hiding their own literacy difficulties.

Voice

> Voice: refers to the students' ability to speak and more importantly to their degree of comfort in speaking.

Here, as Dale and Taylor (2000) have noted, 'exclusive provision' in itself provides a safe place for the participants to explore their insecurities. One student wrote in her personal statement of learning:

I have had the chance to ask many questions which may not be appropriate to general study groups, but within the companionship of a group of dyslexic people I have found that many questions asked and answered have been useful in expanding knowledge and sharing experience which have got people through life this far.

Co-tutoring added a further dimension to the situation; the easy relationship between the two tutors fostered a friendly atmosphere. Karen described it thus: 'One's doing something and the other one's commenting and it just makes life easy, you know, one will be writing on the board and the other one mocking her.' Another student remarked, 'the fact that Barbara and Vanessa were very sort of relaxed people, and again we come back to the point of not being talked at.....it was more that you were being helped than you were being taught'(3rd focus group). He went on to say, 'they were very approachable all the time'. Another said: 'if you needed advice on something you'd got, like assignments or anything, you could always bring them and they would give you some ideas'.

As I mentioned earlier, we were all accustomed to hearing a teaching voice from the student group and, on occasion, the best tutor for the group was one of the students themselves. For example, in the penultimate course while we were working as a group to create an essay plan (we were tackling a 'compare and contrast' question), one student, Ivan, was very vocal about his conviction that he could never move from a simple essay plan. Although I could show him that there was more than one way of writing the essay and assure him that even the simple strategy of presenting all the positive points in the first part of the essay and then the negative points before drawing a conclusion would be acceptable, he remained dissatisfied. But another student, John, currently completing an honours degree, took over the teaching. He recalled making this progression himself and was able to encourage Ivan to believe that, with practice, it was possible to develop what he recognised as a more sophisticated style of writing.

Authority

> Authority: refers to the examination of the traditional concept of the teacher as the power figure and the students as the governed

As we have already noted, the shared responsibility for the course material created some re-distribution of power within the class for instead of having one focus of knowledge, **mastery** of the material was held by the two tutors. The tutors' authority was further unsettled by the administrative arrangements of the course for, realising that completing complex enrolment forms would form a barrier to dyslexic students joining the course in the first place, there was no requirement of prior enrolment. Instead students were invited just to turn up. Thus the tutors had no idea of the numbers of students they were expecting nor their names or their prior education experience. The absence of all these details placed the tutors at something of a disadvantage. For instance, instead of the twelve people who had telephoned to book a place for the first meeting of the first course, there were twenty eight students.

In addition the tutors had no previous experience of teaching together and neither of them had worked with large groups of dyslexic adults before. They made no secret of this and, explaining that the course was new, invited the students to take part in the experiment with them. In the third focus group Nick, who had been present on that occasion, remarked: 'it was very clear during the first course that you were learning as much as we were because you didn't know what you were doing.' When he was asked whether this had made him less confident, he replied: 'No, it comes back to the fact that it wasn't so intimidating in that way because you're not being talked at, you're being talked to. And essentially everyone was in the same boat including the tutors and it does make it less intimidating.' He went on to say, 'It's nice not to have someone standing there saying "I know more than you do so you will listen."'

The students stressed that having two tutors who talked *to* them rather than *at* them was very important. One commented that 'there wasn't that separation' between the tutors and the group; another that 'you were all on one level', and a third that 'this was more even, someone was talking to me, not over my head.' It was, to quote Nick again, 'a much more comfortable relationship'. However, when questioned, they were insistent that both tutors, the dyslexic and the non-dyslexic, were essential components of the team; the course would not work as well with either just a dyslexic tutor or a non-dyslexic tutor. Suzanne said:

We need the extra, to show us a way of looking at life the way some people see it through Barbara, but if there's a bit of it we can't grasp, well Vanessa had got an idea, with being dyslexic and with being a teacher as well, of what we're trying to get at and she puts it a different way round. So we're getting the knowledge, we're getting the best of both worlds really. (3rd focus group)

Another student, Karen, added: 'I think it doesn't matter how brilliant you are, being dyslexic you're still missing out…I know what I want to say but I can't put it down and unless you're brilliant or non dyslexic, you still have that problem.' Nick added, ' I think, very much based on what Karen is saying, that the two of you together make one whole. One of you on your own would be an incomplete teaching team for us'

Positionality

> Positionality: refers to the place one occupies within the societal hierarchy and is usually defined by the major categories of gender, class, sexual orientation or disability.

The students' previous experience was of being excluded from the classroom because of their disability. One student noted: 'I was put into this block called the remedial block….for people who had difficulties and things'(1st focus group). Another commented 'when I was in secondary school I was in a special needs class because I was dyslexic and I got the feeling that there was a general attitude that if you were dyslexic you were mentally deficient or mentally ill' (1st focus group). Now the position was reversed for in this course the only reason they could gain admittance was their dyslexia.

The experiment of creating a student body where all the students shared a disability subverted their usual expectations of being the odd one out and the ones who had to hide their difficulties. Instead the non-dyslexic tutor was the 'different' member of the group and on occasion felt distinctly isolated. Interestingly this feeling of isolation and disadvantage was shared by the other non-dyslexic, the partner of one of the students who joined the class to support her . His personal statement of learning noted: 'Almost felt inadequate not being dyslexic' (Ross, 1998). Thus the exclusive nature of the group was affirming for the students.

However, co-tutoring added a further dimension because one of the two tutors was herself dyslexic. The realisation that, as one of the students phrased it 'Vanessa had lived my life', created a strong feeling of identification. It also provided a powerful role model for they were able to see that dyslexic people could cope within higher education. A second student said:

That's where I'd like to be in time, a dyslexic woman that's succeeded and doing something and you're giving something back….Yes, you're a dyslexic person that's stood up there and given something back and you were trying to give us the encouragement, encouragement to be on this course to learn from Barbara. Wow, I mean, at university level. (1st focus group)

If I extend this notion of **positionality** so that it refers to the position of the course within the institution, we see that this itself was significant for both tutors and participants alike. Being specially funded, the course existed on the margins of normal course provision. It did not have to justify itself in terms of numbers nor have accredited status. Thus the students did not have to produce any written work. Their comments in the focus groups show that this would have been a barrier. The funding also permitted the generous staffing, allowing two tutors to share responsibility for the course. The experimental and temporary

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nature of the provision also encouraged the tutors to feel able to admit their inexperience.

An unexpected outcome was this research process itself which was fuelled by the interest aroused in courses and the continuing demand for them. This encouraged us to investigate why they were effective and whether we could adapt them to take a permanent place within continuing education provision. The focus groups were formed to research both of these aspects. As a university department the School of Continuing Education was interested in the research outcomes of the project and this empowered the focus groups. All the students in the 1998 class were invited to take part and the small group that volunteered their time provided detailed comment on the classes and shaped further courses. Consequently the voices of these previously excluded adults are now included.

Conclusion

This essay began by questioning the effect of being part of a group where the tutors were learning alongside their students. The analysis has demonstrated that the partnership between two tutors played a significant part in facilitating inclusion. All the students recorded that their confidence had increased as a result of the courses and several have gone on to further education. Others have found better employment. The courses were an important learning experience for both tutors and I am very grateful to all those who took part and particularly to my co-tutor, Vanessa Charter.

Note

1.The initial HEFCE stand for the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

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Including parents in the constituency for adult education through ‘parental involvement programmes’: problems and possibilities.

Lyn Tett.

Introduction

This paper investigates collaboration between schools and adult education providers in relation to three examples of 'parent education' programmes. It examines how different conceptions of purposes and values can lead to different outcomes particularly in relation to their conceptualisation of the role of the 'parent'. It also considers how far such programmes might contribute to the tackling of 'social exclusion'. An important component of social inclusion is education which should represent a resource for people to help them identify inequalities and begin to challenge them, using skills, information and knowledge in order to achieve and stimulate change. Through learning, competing values can be reviewed, their relevance for society today and tomorrow can be assessed, and newly emerging values can be transmitted (see Fryer, 1997).

The paper draws on data from two studies. The first surveyed all the state funded Primary Schools and Secondary Schools in Scotland in terms of programmes that were conducted jointly with community - based organisations and identified ten case studies of interesting collaborative projects (see Tett et al, 1998). The second was a detailed examination of a 'family literacy' programme based in a poor outer-city area (see Tett and Crowther, 1998).

The case studies

All three case studies involved collaboration, at least between the school and adult educators and in some cases other agencies as well, in programmes for engaging parents in the life of their local school.

The aim of case study 1, which is based in an area of multiple socio-economic disadvantage, was to encourage parental involvement in their children's education and to foster partnership between home, school and community by increasing social interaction and self confidence and improving access to jobs. This project focuses on the 'whole parent' where a variety of courses are run in response to local need. In addition the women participants have developed several groups themselves. The project manager who sees her role as a facilitator of the participants' decision making encourages this self-help approach. The project uses a very wide local network of organisations to deliver the courses. Much of the work of the full time adult education worker is focused on establishing and maintaining good working relationships with parents, teaching staff and the network of outside agencies.

Case study 2 is based in a similar socio-economic area and comprises several linked projects two of which, the 'shared reading scheme' and the toy library, are designed to promote parent and child interaction in order to improve the educational attainment of the children in the primary school. The other project 'the before and after school club' (BASC) is run by a committee of lone parents who employ a number of part-time staff. Although the staff will assist children with their homework this is not their highest priority. The aim of the club is to provide childcare to enable parents to take up educational opportunities or full-time employment. This particular project, then, has been developed in response to the needs expressed by the parents for cheap, good quality, child-care whilst they engage in other activities themselves which may include education but gives priority to the necessity of earning an income.

Case study 3 is a family literacy project based in poor working class area that comprises collaboration between adult education and the two local Primary Schools. It seeks to include the literacy practices of everyday life in the curriculum through; for example, parent-led investigations focused on identifying literacy practices in the home and community. This approach is coupled with an attempt to enable participants to express their own concerns and aspirations and to help them to think critically about their school experiences. Adults are encouraged to identify and value their own educative role at home with the emphasis being on the positive ways in which they already successfully educate their children.

Comparison of the case studies

All three case studies schools are focused on involving parents, almost exclusively mothers, in the school as a means of increasing the educational attainment of their children. However, the case studies are underpinned by different values and purposes in relation to the way parents are viewed and involved with the school. For example, activities in cases 1 and 3 included provision for parents to develop their own education as well at that of their children. In all these cases there is an emphasis on meeting the needs of parents and encouraging them to develop an awareness of their own requirements. This approach has been led by adult educators who have taken time to discuss with parents what provision they would wish to see and provided support for them in achieving their own objectives rather than simply meeting those of the school. This has resulted in one project in case study 2, the 'Before and After School Club' (BASC), being led, managed and staffed by local women.

All the projects expected the parents to support the work of the school but differed in the type of involvement they encouraged. In case study 2 parents in the 'shared reading scheme' were seen by the head teacher, and saw themselves, as 'helpers' who felt that they had no knowledge of their own to offer the school. As one parent put it 'the teachers know what to do about education and I would rather bake cakes for fundraising for the school because I can do that well'. On the other hand case study 3 encouraged parents to see themselves as educators who had their own valuable knowledge to contribute to their children's education although this knowledge might be different from that seen as important by the school. One parent reported that discussion of the everyday literacy practices that she engaged in had led her to see 'that what we talk about and do at home is as important as what she does in school'. There was evidence that this approach to education was resulting in conflict between the adult education worker and the head teacher because of their differing purposes. The head-teacher wished to see more emphasis in the programme being placed on the educational development of children even when this meant paying less attention to the needs of the adults. The adult education worker, on the other hand, felt that the parents' rights to challenge the school's way of doing things should have priority.

There were also different approaches to the management of the projects though, with the exception of BASC (case study 2); responsibility for decision making was mainly confined to professionals with some consultation with parents even in those projects led by adult education staff. There was little evidence of genuine participation in decision making being shared by the participants in the programmes although all the case studies involved negotiation over the curriculum.

The case studies all have different approaches to collaboration. Case studies 1 and 3 are much more focused on encouraging participation in decision making and in collaborating with parents and other groups to achieve this. The two types of projects in case study 2 have different approaches with BASC emphasising participation by the parents in the running of the project whereas the other projects see their main task as providing facilities and courses as a collaboration between local parents and the school staff.

The key differences in the case studies can be summarised then as, on the one hand, meeting the needs of parents as well as children by promoting parents' own education and involvement in the school on their terms. From this perspective adult education staff often act as mediators between parents and the school. On the other hand, the parents' only role is considered to be the involvement in the education of their children on terms set by the school with a particular emphasis on the raising of their children's academic attainment.

Parents as people

Parent education and family literacy programmes are almost always aimed at poor and working class mothers as a kind of prophylactic against the potential failure of schools (see David et al, 1993). They emphasise what Luttrell (1997: 115) has described as 'the hidden reliance on ideal, not real, women [that] directs people's attention towards the qualities of the caretakers and away from the conditions under which children are (and are not) cared for and educated'. The assumption that pervades many parent education programmes is that mothers are blamed, and they in turn blame themselves, for the institutional failure of schools to educate disadvantaged children.

The dynamics of these assumptions are insidious in two ways. Firstly, a child's successful schooling *should* depend upon a great deal more than the efficacy of any individual parent. People are quick to recognise that schools, by themselves, cannot be expected to meet the intellectual, social and emotional needs of all children, especially those who are poor. But neither can individual parents meet all these needs. As long as the responsibility for monitoring children's schooling rests on individual parents, usually mothers, (David et al, 1993) and is not shared with education officials, teachers, and social services of all sorts, then working class and poor children's school success will be compromised. A public discourse that lays the responsibility on mothers for academic success or failure justifies an educational system that intensifies inequalities by concealing the economic conditions that underlie the creation of inequality.

Secondly, this focus on each individual mother's responsibilities for her children's education encourages women to view their own educational goals as 'selfish' and also leads them to doubt their intellectual capabilities and view their desires for voice as wrong. This is where the role of adult educators in helping people to challenge these negative self-conceptions is so important. It can contribute to overcoming the exclusion that so many who are living in poverty experience through recognising and encouraging the exercising of the talents that they possess (see Vincent and Warren, 1998). To some extent this has been achieved in those case studies, particularly cases 1 and 3, that involve working equally with parents on their own educational goals.

Crozier (1998: 132) argues that there is a need, in any social relationship, for people to learn the rules of that relationship, so that 'the parent in relation to the teacher has to learn how to behave as a parent'. One of these rules is that a fundamental part of being a 'good' parent is to have an overtly positive attitude towards the school and encourage the same in the child. Second, the 'good' parent interacts with his/her child in a way that will prepare them for the school. The 'good' parent also behaves in a particular way in school so that they do not disrupt the smooth running of what schools see as their fundamental business of educating the child.

Again the role of the adult educator in working with parents so that they can feel confident that their perspective is valid and that the school's perspective may be challenged is fundamental. For example, in case study 3 a problematising approach to reading and writing practices was taken which enabled the participants to see that there are a variety of literacies rather than just the one used by the school. This, in turn, helped to challenge deficit views of the culture of the home and the community. Parents gained confidence in ways that helped them to discuss their own literacy practices on a more equal basis with the school's staff so that they were involved more directly in their children's education. This required the development of a greater understanding by teachers of what parents needed to know about school practices through joint training sessions with the family literacy project and school staff. It also involved helping parents be in a better position to be more assertive about questioning the school's practices and seeking explanations for why things were done the way they were.

Many studies (for example, Brighouse and Tomlinson 1991; Merz, and Furman, 1997) have shown that positive parental involvement with schools is one of the prerequisites of effective schooling, and that co-operation between school and home can raise educational achievement. However, parents who lack confidence in their own abilities are unwilling to help their children with schoolwork and require considerable guidance if they are to do so. Moreover, fitting in help with reading into busy and disrupted lives was a burden that many families found difficult to sustain especially when they felt that they did not have the competence to carry out this task effectively (Tizard et al, 1988). However, if parents are to be genuine partners in their children's education then they must be able to share power, responsibility and ownership in ways which show a high degree of mutuality (see Bastiani, 1993). This becomes problematic if parental knowledge about schools and schools' knowledge about parents are characterised by a lack of understanding. For example, Tomlinson (1993:144) has argued that 'there is evidence that teachers are still not well-informed about the lives, backgrounds, expectations and desires of ethnic minority parents and are still willing to stereotype such families as "problems"'. It appears that parents' ability to influence school practices is not high and those who do not share the prevailing culture of the school, such as ethnic minorities, the working classes, people living in poverty, are likely to be excluded from having any 'voice'.

Crozier (1998: 132) conducted research that confirms this lack of partnership between schools and parents. She found in her study that 'although teachers talked about partnership as working together with parents, it was in fact based on the teachers' concerns and definition of the situation, a commitment to bringing about parents' agreement with their view or indeed ensuring consonance'. This view of parents separates the problems presented by individuals from the social and political order which creates these problems in a way which individualises failure, and supports an approach based on the notion of social pathology (see Taylor, 1993). From this perspective, such parents are regarded as unable to make a positive contribution to the school and there is therefore no possibility of them being seen as genuine partners in their children's schooling. This is where the intervention of adult educators can be crucially important in redressing the balance towards the voicing of parents' views. They can help to illuminate the:

Disjuncture between the ideological framing of parent involvement in education and the *everyday activities and interests of parents involved in their children's education. Exploring ways in which mothers and other caregivers are actually involved in their children's education enables us to recognise an inequality between parents and educational staff (Griffith and Schecter, 1998:75).*

As Bastiani (1993) points out, parent-school partnership takes place very much on the *professional's* terms, is conceptualised through professional ideology and articulated through professional language, all of which create barriers for parents. Under these circumstances, many parents experience such 'partnership' in terms of 'inequality, social distance and powerlessness'. It follows that most parent education and family literacy programmes assume that the school's perspective is 'correct' and need only be supported by parents to be successful and so they have little impact on the school. On the other hand, where there is a true partnership model with joint decision making between parents, adult educators, and schools and the assumption is that the schools programme is open to negotiation, there at least some possibility of re-creating the school's programme and mission.

Conclusion

The personal and social damage inflicted by inequality, social exclusion and restricted opportunity is now recognised by government in the UK (DfEE, 1999; Scottish Office, 1999). Schoolteachers and adult education staff come from different cultures and have different conceptions of education and learning. They have, however, distinctive and complementary roles to play in promoting learning and education and creating a fairer social order. Using a parent - centred, dialogic approach positions parents as people with an important contribution to make to the life of the school and the community rather than as 'problems' that need to change to the school's way of seeing things. The implications of this type of approach to 'parent education' and 'family literacy' programmes are far reaching and would require a considerably different emphasis from that which is currently common even in these case study examples which generally represent good collaborative practice.

As Merz and Furman (1997: 66), in a US study point out, 'while purportedly aimed at direct collaboration between the school and the parents, many parental-involvement programs remain at a shallow level, and become a mechanism to get parent support for the school-determined program'. Evidence from research (see, for example, Rae and Ball, 1997; Vincent and Warren, 1998) and these case studies shows that working-class parents strongly support their children's education by showing an interest, giving encouragement and so on but not by relating strongly to the school. This tends to be because they are aware of the cultural differences, particularly in relation to the teachers, that make it difficult for them to influence school practices. It means that participating in the activities that the school feels are appropriate to 'good' parents is seen as rather pointless.

Clearly, whilst learning alone cannot abolish inequality and social divisions it can make a real contribution to combating them, not least by tackling the ways in which social exclusion is reinforced through the very processes and outcomes of education and training. If parents can be helped to challenge deficit views of the culture of their homes and communities then a small step has been taken in enabling their voices to be heard in the learning of their children and in their own educational development. For this to happen, however, some of the control that professionals have imposed on schooling for so long will have to be released and they will have to learn to think of themselves instead as an 'agency of the citizenry' (Merz and Furman, 1997: 98).

Margaret Davies argued in 1913:

Even a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. It causes a smouldering discontent that may flame into active rebellion against a low level of life, and produces a demand, however stammering, for more interests and chances. Where we see ferment, there has been some of the yeast of education' (Quoted in Scott, G. 1998:56).

If school teachers and adult educators wish to see changes in the relationship between schools and parents then 'the yeast of education' will need to be applied to parent education and family literacy programmes. This approach will be focused on developing working-class parents living in poverty, and other community members, as active citizens making demands for change. Parents would then be regarded as people with important contributions to make to education as collaborating partners rather than simply 'teachers' helpers' or the people to be blamed for their children's 'failures'. Different ways of knowing and understanding the world then become valued as a resource for learning rather than being dismissed as 'unofficial knowledge' without worth.

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Including Mezirow's concept of perspective transformation in the study of adult education

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Why include the concept of perspective transformation?

This paper attempts to clarify what Mezirow means by perspective transformation. Perspective transformation was defined in 1978 as 'a structural change in the way we see ourselves and our relationships' towards meaning perspectives which are 'more inclusive, discriminating and integrative of experience' (Mezirow 1978b). After more than two decades since the appearance of this concept, is research like this still necessary? I think that it is. Certainly, the concepts of perspective transformation and transformative learning are taken up by many adult education researchers in both theoretical and empirical studies (Taylor 1998), and there have also been practitioners who explicitly seek to apply Mezirow's ideas (for instance, Cranton 1994). However, the fact that some terms enjoy wide currency and are debated by many does not mean that we can treat the meaning of these terms as given.

Fundamentally, we should not stop our effort to clarify a theoretical concept that we use. It is because, through using a theory, whether in research or practice, we assume its explanatory framework, which determines how much deep and exhaustive understanding of the world we will get. Also, using a particular theory implies taking a stand. As one radical feminist writes, a theory is not a matter of an 'abstract intellectual argument': 'the content of your theory determines the content of your action. How you define what is wrong determines how you will try to solve the problem. How much you are allowed to question determines how much you will be allowed to change' (Leon 1978: 67).

In fact, the concept of perspective transformation seems to have remained elusive until very recently. It was acknowledged in 1997 that '(o)ne of the most elusive concepts of transformative learning is the definitional outcome of a perspective transformation' (Taylor 1997: 49). While there have appeared a number of theoretical critiques of Mezirow's theory, they tend to focus on rather sophisticated issues and it seems that basic questions have not yet been fully explored, such as: What kind of change in adults is meant by perspective transformation? Why is this transformation valued? What is assumed as a desirable state for adults in his theory? These are the questions which I would like to address.

In the following, I will analyse Mezirow's conceptualisation of perspective transformation and his approach to adult learning, utilising the results of the author's interview with Mezirow. Because of the limited space, I will only delineate Mezirow's theoretical position and can not discuss the validity of his particular claims (such as those regarding women's oppression and Freire). A more comprehensive evaluation of his theory is presented elsewhere, in my M.Phil thesis (Fusé 1998) and Ph.D dissertation in the process of being submitted (in Japanese).

Interview with MezirowI was fortunate to have an opportunity to conduct an interview with Mezirow at the International SCUTREA Conference in London (July 1997). The interview was flexibly structured around several areas of questions, including those on the process (critical reflection of assumptions and discourse) and the outcome of perspective transformation. I started the interview by asking Mezirow to explain such basic but abstract concepts as 'perspective transformation,' 'meaning perspectives,' and 'discourse.'

In explaining perspective transformation, Mezirow gave three examples: the change in women's self-concept, Freire's conscientisation and psychotherapy. These are the examples which have been frequently, and almost exclusively, mentioned throughout in Mezirow's writings since the emergence of the concept (Mezirow 1978b, 1998). This would imply that Mezirow's core images of perspective transformation remain largely unchanged over the past two decades, despite considerable elaboration of his evolving theory. I briefly present his explanation of these three examples in the following.

1. Change in women's self-concept: more options for life

The reformulation of their self-concept which women experienced when participating in 're-entry programs' at community colleges and in consciousness raising groups, is the very example upon which Mezirow's earliest concept of perspective transformation was based (Mezirow 1978a). In the interview, Mezirow described women's perspective transformation as becoming aware of assumptions which have limited their self-concept to the 'traditional' role of women, and coming to think that they can do 'many other things besides simply have the family, be a wife, and be a good neighbour or a good church person.' That is amovement from a perspective limiting women to traditional female roles to one which adds 'a wide range of career options and new ways of redefining old relationships and oneself' (Mezirow 1995: 44).

Mezirow went on to claim:

Women no longer believe that they are limited to only traditional ways of behaving, now it opens up many new possibilities. It's a better way to think. You can still choose only to (do) homemaking. That's OK. But at least you have options. You make a choice. It's not made for you by the society. You make the choice. That's better. (original emphasis)

The above comment suggests that the meaning perspective about women's roles can be regarded as wider, if it includes many other roles or career options than 'traditional' roles and if it provides women with more options for decision making about their lives. Mezirow agreed with this interpretation:

Of course. So, you have more options, more choices, more freedom to make good determination for yourself, that's best. The best one (meaning perspective) is the one that gives you more choices.

2. Freire's conscientisation: increased sense of agency

The second example which Mezirow talked about was Freire's conscientisation. He interpreted that Freire helped villagers in South America to 'look at their assumptions,' of which they were not aware. Mezirow said that Freire, by initiating a series of questions, would help the peasants see that they took the current state of their lives for granted and that they had been 'oppressed and exploited by an old established relationship that they have with their land owner':

They (peasants) took for granted that this man in the big house was their patron, was the person who took care of them when they're sick. When they had a fight, he would decide who would win. They looked to him and are dependent upon him. And they have come to see that this is taken for granted, this is an assumption. And that's an assumption which really oppresses them.

Interestingly, a similar view to seeing peasants' problems as their depending upon the landowner's decisions and not making self-decisions for their own lives, appears in

Mezirow's book based on his experience of community development in Pakistan (Mezirow 1963). Mezirow notes that in Pakistan the 'zamindar' (landowner) makes 'major decisions for his villagers' and that the villagers 'look to or depend on the will of the zamindar' (p. 97 - 99).

As is clear from the above, Mezirow interprets conscientisation in a largely psychological sense, as leading to an increased sense of agency. It is peasants' coming to see themselves as 'having options for controlling their own lives and dealing with constraints which had before been perceived as given and beyond their control' (Mezirow 1978b: 103).

3 Psychotherapy: recovery of the function of a self-guiding adult

As the third example of perspective transformation, he told the story of a black woman, who could not finish her job because she suffered from a 'perfectionist syndrome' (also depicted in Mezirow 1991: 142 - 143). Her problem was being unable to finish her work when she came close to finishing it. In psychotherapy, she was helped to see 'the assumptions behind her feelings,' that is, that she would feel anxiety when she came to finish anything, because of the fearful experience in her childhood, of being severely scolded about her slightly poor marks at school by her violent father.

Mezirow stated that the end point of this case of perspective transformation is for the woman to have the insight to understand why she felt this way and to gain control of her feelings: 'You have to understand why you feel this way, otherwise you can't do anything about it. Once you understand the reason for these feelings, then you begin to gain control of your feelings.' When I asked if this woman can be said to have acquired a wider perspective, Mezirow agreed, on the grounds that she is able to 'get rid of the anxiety feelings that kept her from performing her job' and 'she's able to do things she couldn't do before.'

In short, in this case of psychotherapy, the process of perspective transformation is seen as that of increasing awareness of one's feelings and recovering the function of a self-guiding adult, by being freed from an assumption which has been causing psychological blocks. As Mezirow writes elsewhere, when new attitudes and new behaviors become necessary, these often generate 'internal conflict' manifested as 'inhibitions, defenses, or rigid character patterns,' which causes adults 'to be rigid or limited in their responses to changing situations.' They can 'recover a necessary function when they become able to be critically reflective of the distorted assumptions that blocked action appropriate to a situation' (Mezirow 1991: 143).

Mezirow's constructivist approach to adult learning

Mezirow explained that all three examples above share the same process of 'becoming aware of assumptions'; we can become aware that we have been trapped by our narrow, rigid, limiting patterns of thinking, feeling and acting which we have been conditioned into and taken for granted. By this awareness, we can have more freedom and flexibility to guide ourselves in a given situation.

From the above explanations, it is clear that Mezirow's theory is psychological, focused on the effect of reality which an individual constructs and acts upon; this 'reality' is only imaginary and in our mind, but has a real constricting force for us. This approach is clearly in line with constructivism in psychology, as Mezirow claims himself (Mezirow 1994: 222). In fact, in conceptualising perspective transformation Mezirow consulted a book by Kelly, a major constructivist, on the theory of 'personal constructs' (Mezirow 1978a, Kelly 1963).

Kelly assumes that '(m)an looks at his world through transparent patterns or templates which he creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed' (Kelly 1963: 8 - 9). According to Kelly, 'all of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement.

> *... there are always some alternative constructions available to choose among in dealing with the world. No one needs to paint himself into a corner; no one needs to be completely hemmed in by circumstances; no one needs to be the victim of his biography'* (p. 15).

Also for Mezirow, a meaning perspective is 'essentially like having a pattern' and 'you always have some pattern of thinking, you don't escape from a pattern, but you go toward a pattern that's better.'

The ideal of self-determination implicit in the concept of perspective transformation

In order to further explore Mezirow's conceptualisation of perspective transformation, I brought in an example of a Japanese woman, who lives in a very conservative way but is happy about that way of living. Contrary to my expectations, Mezirow did not take the conservative lifestyle as the state which needs transformation, on the grounds that this woman is not unhappy or malfunctioning:

> *So? It's O.K. The only time that people change their perspectives is when they're not happy, when they have a problem, so that the old ways are not working any more. If that same woman were to take a trip, and have some women friends, in another culture and see, you know, all the excitement and be attracted to their way of life. That's when there would have to be transformation. But as long as she is happy, and doesn't think about it, no problem.*

What if this woman intentionally chooses, among other choices, to live in a conservative way and likes to live in that way? Mezirow's stance was perfectly clear:

> *' If she chooses, if she freely chooses her own way, that's good, that's transformation, too. That's good, because she really does see the context. She does understand everything that's happening, and she's saying, 'Ok, now I see it all, and my choice is based on everything I see, that I am not going to make a change.'*

Then, can we say that this woman has undertaken perspective transformation, if she really knows many other ways of living and still chooses her conservative lifestyle? To this question, Mezirow's answer was again without hesitation:

> *You can say that, if you want to. You can because she made the choice. Transformation requires that there be a decision made. And she's made a decision, based on full information of the context. So, if she understands where her old ideas came from, the nature of those ideas, the consequences in her life and the lives of other people, whether they are effective and then she decides, that's good for her. Good. Nobody insists that they always make a change, but just to be able to choose freely the options.*

Mezirow made clear that coming to make a free and informed self-determination is transformation, regardless of the choice made; perspective transformation requires critical reflections about assumptions, but 'it doesn't mean you cannot choose the existing arrangement if you like, or the existing situations.' He also makes this point in his writing: 'A transformative learning experience requires that the learner makes an informed and reflective decision to act. This decision may ... result in a reasoned reaffirmation of an existing pattern of action' (Mezirow 1996b: 163 - 164, original emphasis). This centrality of the act of self-determination in perspective transformation may not be fully recognised in a general interpretation, which sees perspective transformation as a 'dramatic,' or at least, visible shift in one's world view, attitude or behaviour.

In the interview, it also became apparent that Mezirow's concept of 'discourse' is related to the ideal of decision making. Mezirow defined 'discourse' in a rather idiosyncratic way, as the act of testing the validity of one's beliefs by assessing its justification, through turning to others, asking about their experience and getting their ideas. Mezirow explained that even after being critically reflective, if we have a problem that we are 'not so sure about' our belief, we have to test it through discourse with other people. For instan[illegible] if we are not sure 'whether it's better to have a modern view of women or the traditional view of women,' we need to talk to many people about this problem so that we can arrive at 'dependable insight' through this 'collective judgment.' Mezirow once wrote that validating one's belief enables one to act upon it 'with confidence' (Mezirow 1998: 196). And because a 'belief is a habit that guides action' (Mezirow 1996b: 163), making one's belief more dependable would result in more effective action in a given situation.

In what sense is perspective transformation 'developmental' and 'emancipatory'? In his writings, Mezirow often claims that perspective transformation is the movement toward adult development and emancipation. Mezirow states that some frames of reference (meaning perspectives) are 'more useful in dealing with diverse or changing circumstances,' and that those which are 'better able to deal with a wider range of decision-making' are 'more emancipatory than others' (Mezirow 1996a: 238).

Then, in what sense is it desirable to have a meaning perspective which is able to deal with a wider range of decision making? There seem to be several advantages which Mezirow implies. Firstly, it enables one to be adaptive in changing circumstances, to keep functioning as a self-guiding, autonomous adult. An adult's life cycle and changes in personal life often necessitate new attitudes and behaviours (Mezirow 1991: 143), and individuals are required to 'be prepared to make many diverse decisions on their own' in the face of rapid changes of values and weakening of old traditional authority structures (Mezirow 1994: 222). Rigid perspectives which are limited in adaptive responses may cause disorientation and maladaptation.

Secondly, having more options means being closer to realising an opportunity for personal development and fuller self-actualisation. This is the reason why Mezirow sees meaning perspectives limiting women to traditional roles as oppressive: they served as 'constraints to personal development, which have foreclosed promising options for self-actualization without allowing her the opportunity to test their relevance and value within her own experience.' (Mezirow 1978a: 15).

Thirdly, a 'contractual' commitment to one's belief permits opportunities of future revision, thus increasing the possibilities of acquiring further developmental meaning perspectives when they become available in the future: 'The test of a better perspective is not only that it is more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative, and can deal with a wider range of experience, but also that it facilitates an eventual move to still broader perspectives. Contractual commitments of solidarity with society, institutions, ideologies, and persons ... are significant indicators of maturity.' (Mezirow 1978a: 17).

Conclusion

In conclusion, perspective transformation can be interpreted as the improvement of conditions for decision making. Through critical reflection of assumptions, the range of options and possibilities visible for an individual is expanded, and discourse helps one to make a more dependable choice. Even when the resulting choice is not a change, having options and making a conscious decision makes considerable difference, because the choice is deliberately made by oneself, not uncritically assimilated or imposed as the only possible option.

Essentially, for Mezirow, to enhance the quality of adults' self-determination is what adult education is all about: 'The essence of adult education is to help learners construe experience in a way that allows them to understand more clearly the reasons for their problems and the action options open to them so that they can improve the quality of their decision making' (Mezirow 1991: 203). Ideal adults for Mezirow are autonomous thinkers (Mezirow 1997). Operating within a humanistic perspective, Mezirow sees it as desirable that adults decide what to do about their own lives. It is assumed that an individual can make the best choice for oneself, and that an adult's capacity of self-determination will naturally flourish once the appropriate conditions for decision making are prepared.

So far, I have analysed Mezirow's approach to adult learning. Now we are left with a question: Are we going to accept it or not? And why? I hope that this study will stimulate more discussions on Mezirow's theory.

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The contradictions of inclusion and diversity in an emerging nation: the case of South African adult education

John Wallis

The thrust towards inclusivity has been central to South African social policy since democratisation. The notion of the rainbow nation and the more recent promotion of an African Renaissance have heightened debate around the extent to which it is either desirable or practical to pursue policies aimed at preserving and promoting the diverse cultural formations in the country while at the same time seeking to join the global economy. The simple example of the decision to adopt eleven official languages – some of which have a strong oral as opposed to literary tradition – stands in counterpoint to the scramble to acquire English as the lingua franca of well-paid work. This paper explores the problems emerging in the adult education sector from policy based on Northern and Western notions of equality of opportunity and notions of diversity.

The first point to be made is that for many years – and particularly under the extremes of apartheid – difference was used as a specific discourse to divide people in South Africa. Not only was the issue of colour exploited, but also the traditional identities of African people, which provided the basic rationale for the creation of the 'homelands' and the justification for the forced removals of hundreds of thousands of people. As with all ideological constructs, such 'logic' touched on a felt reality among the population, and the power of the argument can best be seen in the persistence of the appeal of the Inkatha Freedom Party to the history of the Zulu nation in their attempt to retain their key Provincial and national support in kwa-Zulu Natal. The presence of this range of identities extends across the whole of South African society: ex-pat English, Boers, Indians, Coloureds – the list could go on. Each of these groupings has particular forms of culture that give the nation a tremendous range of lifestyles and identities, both singular and multiple.

In one sense this can be seen as a source of cultural wealth, and there is no doubt that the country recognises this richness. However, the very diversity tends to generate tensions that may apply across very different geographic sites. The globalising tendencies in terms of both economic relations and cultural forms that have become the orthodoxy of contemporary analysis have introduced pressures that operate in direct contradiction to the retention of the older cultures. As mentioned above the question of language itself is a paradigm of the pressures. Levels of illiteracy are still high in the country and the need to educate the adult population is recognised by the government. However, the attempts to address this issue are faced with serious practical and cultural difficulties. Firstly, influential educators argue that in order to combat the major illiteracy problem, adults must first become competent in their first language (Lyster, 1992). This may be the case in pure educational terms, but some of the languages in South Africa possess virtually no written texts, let alone those suitable for use with adult learners. Additionally, there is a clear recognition that the use of English is absolutely essential to economic success in the country – with the exception of the Afrikaans universities the majority of teaching in higher education is conducted in English, not least of the reasons being that academic texts do not as yet exist in minority languages. In a sense this may not be a problem in certain areas such as Europe where minority languages flourish in the context of multi-lingual communities, but there is evidence, particularly among the young, that their aspiration is to move to English as their first formal medium of communication, thus threatening the development of the minority languages if not their existence.

Perhaps the most worrying trend in this multi-cultural context is the danger of the minority cultures being drained of fundamental meaning and being left as hollow representations of previously vibrant patterns of life. There is certainly an awareness of this danger as South Africa seeks to exploit its traditions as a key element in a developed tourist industry. The reduction of cultural forms to postmodern simulacra is easy to observe, with Zulu villages complete with dancing and drumming constructed within easy reach of the key tourist areas to enable part-day encounters with the 'traditions of Africa'. This is not to denigrate such activities as they represent one of the few growth points in the South African economy, but they do serve to underline the ways in which cultural forms have become commodified within the context of a discourse that claims to seek to retain them for the sake of their inherent value to their current members. This last point brings us to the consideration of a second and perhaps more important issue of inclusivity – that of economic opportunity.

It is in the area of economic and related social policy that the tensions touched on above are most clearly seen and where the education of adults is most in evidence. If the pressure on general cultural forms results in the kind of 'Disneyfication' that is outlined above, the decisions by the government to enter the globalised economy as the leading player in southern Africa have generated a situation where 'difference' so often celebrated in the fields of 'culture' is replaced by a stark liberal individualism. As with many states world-wide South Africa has claimed its future will rest directly on the qualities of its citizens. Central to this claim is the necessity to develop human capital to its maximum level and seek to constantly upgrade the quality of the workforce. The rationale behind such policy with its references to flexibility and the changing nature of work are by now well aired (Blackwell and Eilon, 1991) and have been submitted to frequent critique (Brown and Lauder, 1996). This discourse is absolutely dominant and reinforces the neo-liberal economic policy which is being rigorously enforced by the ANC government, and which finds its essential expression in the *General Employment and Redistribution: A Macroeconomic Strategy* (1996).

For adult educators there is very little of surprise in the policy as it was largely adapted from models already in operation across the world – particularly in the UK and Australasia. The state has established a system of 'lifelong education' that enables the individual to acquire qualifications throughout life in response to their personal needs. Qualifications have been standardised and re-designed in an outcomes-based format, with quality assurance resting with central government agencies. Unlike pure outcomes based educational systems there is still the intention to retain specific course-based awards, all of which will be assessed for their consistency by a state agency. The domain of adult study has been divided into a number of fields of study that are administered by sectoral education and training boards which have the responsibility of developing opportunities within their given area. In order to finance the initiative and to give industry a material interest in its success the government has introduced a levy system that obliges industry to contribute a percentage of its wage bill for training purposes, a portion of which can be claimed back if companies arrange approved training for their employees. The government has also retained a percentage of the levy to fund training for those out of work and thus excluded from the main thrust of provision.

Before considering the impact of these reforms, it is important to emphasise one point: the South African scheme actually integrates schooling with continuing education. All aspects of education are in the process of converting to outcomes based models and all awards, including the key school examinations are located clearly at levels in the national framework. In this sense there has been an attempt to establish the lifelong learning patterns – with the stress on individualised, self-directed learning – within initial education. Similarly, work in adult basic education is aligned with particular levels of schooling, and is being made available across all the fields of study. So it is now possible to engage in adult basic education specifically geared to such areas as agriculture and engineering. Certainly, there can be no doubt that the emphasis within the scheme is directly related to the links between study and occupational opportunity.

Before considering issues of a more fundamental nature it is necessary to comment on the very overt issue of the range and pace of the reforms undertaken. In its first term of office the democratic government passed into law in excess of 500 units of legislation, including major Acts dealing with education at all levels. This pressure on an infrastructure that historically had been weak and very diffuse inevitably caused serious problems. For example research revealed that of all the materials dispatched to schools for use in the training of community members to take up roles in school governance only 19% actually reached the schools and governing bodies (Palmer, 1998). This apparent disjuncture between policy production and the ability of the state and local state to deliver the service may be an issue faced by all reforming governments in developing nations.

A second issue in the field of education and training relates to the tension between the nature of the reform espoused and the capacity of the professional staff to meet the requirements of a new system. As countries of very different kinds appear to be drawn towards very similar forms of provision in order to compete in the world economy, issues arise as to whether existing systems are equipped to cope with reform to ways of approaching education which have arisen in very different social conditions. This is extremely well instanced in the case of the reforms of education to outcome-based provision across the board. Until very recently the training of teachers in South Africa was directly geared to reinforce the social distinctions central to the apartheid system and many staff in largely 'African' schools were trained under the old auspices, which emphasised centrally controlled curricula and teaching materials. Within the system of Christian Education learning was teacher-based and focused on rote learning to a great degree. The new approach to all education in South Africa now hinges upon outcome-based models, which are student-centred, self-paced, resource-based, and dependent on the creativity of teachers to monitor and arrange teaching in highly flexible forms.

Some criticism has centred on the simple fact that such a policy – desirable as it might be – flies in the face of the material realities of education in South Africa in that resources are simply not available to meet the needs of such a strategy (see Jansen, 1998). However, perhaps more important is the apparent difficulty of staff in the schools to cope with the new models. In the schools, where the key changes are most clearly seen the aim was to completely convert the curriculum by 2005. However, the support given to teachers to help them adapt to the extremely complex demands of the new model depended largely on a centrally funded cascade model that proved itself quite unsuited to the task of the fundamental changes required. These comments are not intended to be simply a critique of the failure of government to provide resources, but to question whether the policy of adopting what appear 'cutting edge' policies in conditions such as those pertaining in South Africa is realistic – particularly in the context of human resource weakness. The much over-used concept of capacity development has proved a major issue and the government has recently established a review committee to consider progress and respond to a rising chorus of concern. The situation is made even more acute by the fact that for a range of reasons the number of teachers in training is extremely low, thus eliminating the possibility of the newly-trained cadres acting as change agents within the system.

A similar reality exists in respect of adult education at a basic level. Apart from vocational work adult education in South Africa has been generally focused on basic learning. The right to a basic education is enshrined in the constitution and government has produced an ambitious national plan to establish coherent provision, including participative bodies from national and provincial to community level (DoE, 1998). In the last few days before the writing of this paper an Act of Parliament has also been produced outlining the basic principles and organisation of ABET in the country (RSA, 2000). These elaborate plans and proposals have arrived at a time when the reality of provision is displaying a decline in participation and with severe problems arising in certain areas, particularly in public provision. The situation is also made more severe with marked decline in the activity of the non-governmental sector, partly as a result of funders now channeling resources through the government rather than directly to the agencies. Recent reform has had an equally disturbing effect, with the model of cascade training being perhaps even less relevant with staff who may well be only trained at the most basic level in their own field. Evidence on the ground is that the scheme has been largely ineffective (Lyster, 2000).

To return to the issue of inclusivity in the economy fundamental questions arise around the nature of lifelong education being offered. Firstly, there is a very strong sense that there is a real possibility of an individual entering what might be called the established labour force. This logic operates within the context of certain areas of South Africa bearing up to 60% unemployment in formal terms and with jobs being shed in the formal sector. As elsewhere in the world the cry is for a more technologically skilled labour force, with little recognition of the limited scope for work in that particular sector. The second familiar theme is the stress on educating individuals to create their own work, with the resultant emphasis on entrepreneurial skill and the creation of small and micro- enterprises. This thrust is reflected by the inclusion of entrepreneurial skill being included as part of the compulsory education curriculum. This aspect has an additional feature in South Africa, as there is an open recognition of an informal economy, which is providing livelihoods for many people and an expressed interest in supporting such work while recognising its essentially limited nature. This latter point raises serious issues for educators as sectors of the community may be seen as being placed into an area of activity which by its nature almost condemns them to a second order of economic activity. This is not to deny the need for individuals to make a living in whatever form, but to point out that the inclusivity of the meritocratic promises of national policy may need close scrutiny.

In many senses it is the young people who are bearing the brunt of economic re-structuring in the sense of extremely high levels of unemployment and the restricted impact of national interventions such as the 'learnership' scheme that sponsors training within industry (RSA 1998). There are occasional outbreaks of moral panic concerning young people, but as industry downsizes and rightsizes new recruits are frequently the first to suffer, and there is evidence beginning to emerge that the training discourse is beginning to wear thin among the young as they face repeated experiences of rejection (Mpungose and Wallis 2000). Similar concern is also beginning to be expressed over the nature of interventions. There is a growing concern that short courses and limited work experience do not really equip young people for a highly competitive work environment already well supplied with experienced workers, and even their potential price advantage is being eroded as adults begin to accommodate to depressed wage levels.

The brief notes above may serve to give a bleak picture of an emerging nation and the difficulties it confronts in attempting to follow the 'no alternative' logic of globalisation as presented by certain analysts. However, behind the discussion lies a larger question of what should the role of adult education be under such circumstances. There is no denying that there is a need to make sure that people have access to what has been conveniently called a livelihood as opposed to a job in the South; however, other issues may also need to be addressed. Current policy – perhaps worldwide – serves to pit individual against individual in a perpetual contest for access to social goods – in face of the evidence that there will only be a limited number of successes. It invites the 'failures' to internalise the cause of their own lack of success and offers the never-ending road of self-improvement as a permanent opportunity. Not only does this tend to atomise people but it runs counter to some deeply held beliefs in South Africa and exposes some official policy to charges of rhetoric.

It is essential to recognise the way in which what are often presented as a set of technical interventions carry with them fundamental assumptions about the nature of human status and even purpose. This liberal individualism stands in stark contrast to other beliefs in South African culture which stress the recognition of the fact that humans can only come to their realisation in relation with others and that personal wholeness is inseparable from collective fulfillment. This concept – usually referred to as *ubuntu* – is often used in political discourse to identify the distinctiveness of African life: its essentially collective character and its concern for others. This sits uneasily with contemporary policy and yet also may suggest ways in which adult education might engage with contemporary issues beyond the merely technical.

The commitment to the collective as a key to individual development may explain to a degree the reason why the work of Freire was so readily taken up and why it continues to inform the work of a number of key NGOs. In light of the economic and social realities of Southern Africa the possibilities of full employment within global capitalism is not realistic, and the policies being pursued may be both practically unrealistic and misguided. Perhaps at the heart of the issue is the need to address the old educational questions regarding the nature of the individual within a democracy and the values that inform citizenship. Although much is said about citizenship education little appears of a challenging nature, and major debates are often hidden beneath crude discussions concerning the labour market. The state is caught in a conundrum: on the one hand it is praising the values of difference and diversity and seeking to integrate all into the nation, at the same time it is administering a system of educational and economic opportunity which can only work by treating all citizens as if they were the same. The explicit tensions around this contradiction continue to emerge. By simply encouraging the inclusion of women and the rural communities to enter the formal labour market – for entirely laudable reasons – the government raises even more expectations in an economy where the labour market is not expanding. The real danger is that once 'different' groups are identified, the possibilities for every kind of oppression become possible, as recent reaction to affirmative action has revealed.

Essentially all this paper has sought to do is to note the complexity of adult education in respect of inclusivity in a particular society. Beneath the discussion is the concern that adult education may be co-opted into a project that cannot succeed except by ignoring the nature of the inequalities inherent within the current social order. Perhaps there is need to re-capture the broader social project that once defined adult education and confront the deeper political and economic issues that are producing contemporary 'problems' we are supposed to try to solve.

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'Dual track' - combining 'inclusive' education for individuals with 'bottom-up' community regeneration initiatives intended to combat social exclusion.

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In policy terms, the main response of the previous and current governments and of the European Union (EU) to long term unemployment has been to focus on unemployed individuals as lacking in skill and capacity and to make the assumption that this 'deficit' can be remedied through vocational training and job search support. European funds targeted at long term unemployed people from so-called 'hard to reach' groups have had this same focus of an implied or stated deficit model. The recently published *Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (SEU 2000) and *Policy Action Team (PAT) Reports*, PAT 1 on *Jobs for All*, and 2 on *Skills* (DfEE 2000a & b), indicate a change of tone, but I suspect only partially a change of substance. This paper examines a project which started well in advance of these developments and in which the underlying assumptions of policy-makers were not shared by some community and education practitioners who developed an approach called dual track, which suggests that meeting the learning and vocational training needs of adults can be combined successfully with work which benefits and regenerates the communities in which they live and addresses social exclusion.

The purpose of this paper is to examine projects, part-funded through European Social Fund (ESF) - Integra, based on the 'dual track' concept. While 'regeneration' and 'social inclusion' are not unproblematic (Furbey 1999), local practitioners felt that practical action needed to be taken in ways which could be resourced and in which local people could have a voice.

I suggest that the strategy, at EU and national levels of funding initiatives to combat social exclusion with remits connected exclusively to employability and the labour market, is unlikely to result in genuine 'inclusion', as exclusion operates on a number of levels (Bur 1999). This in no way denies that unemployed people also need jobs.

I was a participant action researcher within the project and combined this with my previous experience as a community based practitioner to evaluate the project. Here, I use a case study to discuss the possibilities of the dual track model and explore some evaluation results, using indicators developed during the projects.

The project studied is a partnership of ten local actions working with 600 people from 'excluded' communities over 2 years. All use aspects of the dual track concept. The partnership comprises a local authority's community education service combined with its area co-ordination teams, voluntary and community organisations, a private organisation and a university. The Integra programme is intended primarily to increase the ability of individuals to gain paid employment by increasing their 'employability'. Though the importance of regeneration is acknowledged, little reference is made to the lack of available jobs. The projects were designed to include adult education and community development but also aimed to enable people to influence service delivery and to work locally to bring about change.

Community development is a 'systematic approach' to the development of activities within 'communities', either of experience or neighbourhoods, whether organised by community workers or others' (Watts 1997). It is based on clear values and principles; it is about people working together to create a fairer and improved society and may include: anti-poverty; active citizenship; anti-discriminatory practice; community-led, democratic practice; participation in public affairs and access to power; prevention of problems; encouragement of people to use the skills, knowledge and experiences they have and to learn more so that they can take action for change. (Voluntary Activity Unit, 1996)

Capacity building in this context means:

> *Development work that strengthens the ability of community organisations and groups to build their structures, systems, people and skills so that they are better able to define and achieve their objectives and engage in consultation and planning, manage community projects and take part in partnerships and community enterprises. It includes various aspects of training, organisational and personal development and resource building, [...] reflecting the principles of empowerment and equality.*
> (Skinner, 1997)

The term is also used to refer to increasing the capacity of a range of service providers to act appropriately within disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Dual track was developed during a preceding ESF project and, having proved successful, was adapted to meet the needs of the new project. Dual track was introduced for a number of reasons. Firstly, some project managers recognised the incompatibility of the funding agenda with their own primary purpose which was a combination of access to learning for adults and 'empowerment' education for social inclusion and lifelong learning. They also recognised that they were able to use these innovative funds to develop work with certain target groups which they could not otherwise afford. However these managers had fundamental difficulties, which I shared, with the framework of the funding, which apparently suggested that long term unemployment can be solved solely by increasing the employability of individuals. A number of issues were recognised: economic improvement for individuals and communities does not come solely from training individuals in vocational areas; economic regeneration requires a combination of activities; community based economic and social activity will contribute to regeneration; there are few jobs available locally; there are paid and unpaid opportunities which could be created or maintained locally; awareness of the long haul needed by many to enter or re-enter the labour market; many people have or could develop skills which communities need; these skills are often under-utilised or under-valued; awareness that local people are able to voice their needs and take steps to address them if support and opportunities are available.

At the end of the first project I wrote:

> *The most innovative aspect of the project was to attempt to combine a community development and capacity building approach with individual progression in vocational or basic training/education and employability. The 'shorthand' term used for convenience for this concept was Dual Track and, though the term has limitations, it has now become readily understood by partners. A new term which more effectively describes the process may yet be found: in particular we need to reflect the way in which the 'tracks' are not two separate and parallel lines but, rather, are interwoven, interdependent strands of activity, each contributing to a greater understanding and development of the other.*
> (Watts, 1997)

Initial conclusions

Dual track offered a contrast to vocational training and education which may have an incidental impact on communities and groups and explored ways in which this process can become intentional. (Watts and Farnell, 1998)

My conclusions were that the dual track model was worth pursuing, but requires adequate staff training as otherwise success will be limited and participants and practitioners may become frustrated. The approach needs to be cross-sector and interdisciplinary from the outset. Shared values need to be explored by all partners. Planning should include both practitioners and participants. Had more time been devoted to staff development then it is likely that practitioners would have gained a deeper understanding of the model and there would have been the opportunity for more thorough testing of the approach. Where projects did not develop dual track as fully as they might, I believe this was largely due to lack of capacity amongst staff or management. (Watts, 1997)

The context for the second project was a change of government and the setting up of the Social Exclusion Unit, though the project had been designed before either of these occurred. Dual track was applied in the second project, though only as one optional tool, as the pressure for innovation in each new round of funding prevents the continuous development of one idea.

Case study

I aim to show the simultaneous progression of an individual and community development. I have chosen to highlight work which closely fits the dual track concept to provide a clear example. Other actions, which did not have community work as their central theme, also revealed dual track outcomes.

The 'local action'

The Community Regeneration project at the Bangladesh Centre involved a 'sandwich' of activities; community networking and outreach, a training programme and an employment liaison programme to help people into work or training. The aim was to combine capacity building in the community with support for individuals. The Centre's project is open to all sections of the community (currently attracting more than 20 different nationalities) and has a particular focus on the needs of the Bangladeshi Community.

Sibia was already an active volunteer at a Bangladeshi community centre and applied for a traineeship with a community development agency which offered a paid placement in the centre. Both the development agency and the centre were members of the Integra project partnership. The agency recruited six people from different communities for placements in community settings which included training and working towards the NVQ in Community Work.

Sibia was appointed as a trainee development worker to work with young Bangladeshi women. The Centre had identified that numbers of post-school young women were not taking up jobs or education and were at home. I conducted a series of interviews with the trainee during her 18-month training period. This is her story.

Making contacts

Sibia's main role was to work with young Bangladeshi women, encourage them to come into the Centre, identify their needs and participate in relevant courses or activities. In fact, she worked with Asian women - and

well, women in general.
I went out establishing links with the community and [...] because I've been living in the area for a long time I knew some of them personally too.
(Interview SK4)

Sibia drew up a database of known contacts and talked to them. She used these to contact women she did not yet know. She established links with a range of local organisations such as advice centres with which the Centre often already had links but they were not aware that the Centre had opportunities for younger women. These links helped her to become more aware of the other available opportunities.

It was difficult at first because I was really quite scared. I didn't know what all these organisations and people would think of me and I might say something wrong because I didn't have much experience.
(Interview SK4)

The worker also had to speak to young women's parents to assure them of the safety of the Centre. Sometimes a barrier was that the worker was young and there was doubt about her ability or right to be doing the work. However, once the young women came to the centre, fears were mainly allayed.

It was very hard to get young women motivated and interested. Face to face individual encouragement was crucial. 'It's all about building confidence.' Usually organisations would not have this level of time available and yet it is the only way to reach the most disadvantaged or excluded groups.

Who the women were

The women were mainly aged 16 - 19. Sibia also supported older women on, for example, health awareness. Most women in this project had been in Britain all or most of their lives. Mainly Asian women attended, but there were some Arabic and some white women. The majority were Muslim.

Identifying needs

Having made contact with a number of young women Sibia asked them all to come into the Centre to an initial meeting. 22 women and girls attended. Sibia facilitated with the help of a more experienced colleague. During discussion they listed everything they wanted to do. This included a range of social and leisure activities and courses, ranging from self-defence to IT. The Centre put most of the suggestions into action since it operates as a neighbourhood learning centre (DfEE 2000b).

What women did

Some women enrolled on existing courses such as IT and Sewing. Other programmes were developed especially; first aid courses, health awareness, sports and social events. It was important to maintain a range of activities as then young women were likely to remain involved and perhaps to move into other programmes.

Some women also progressed to a local authority scheme, involving a 2 year placement in primary schools working towards the NVQ in Early Years Education and Childcare with the potential to progress to further or higher education or stay in a job as an Educational Assistant.

Barriers to successful work with young women

Most of the young women concerned got married early and have had children early and they are scared of getting out of the home and lack confidence. They have lost self-confidence and are worried that they won't get things right. There are also cultural barriers in that they think maybe they won't be allowed to come and do this. They think that perhaps men will be involved so they would not be allowed. Their partners or parents may not permit them to do something they want to do. They think there will be religious or other cultural barriers. It depends on who they are. Actually we did manage to encourage most of them - because most of them that were staying at home, we were able to show them that it was all right to come to the Centre for family events first. Many then came to other activities. Now [most] parents realise how important it is to join in with community activities [...] It's about showing people what the Centre is really about and

changing their perceptions. This is a safe place.
(Interview SK4)

Another barrier is the cost of activities. The Centre, despite strong requests, could not and cannot provide everything free. After the project many activities can be continued but some are ineligible for funding and must be partly paid for by participants. People are also 'held back when they think they can't speak English'. In fact they often know more than they think but need the opportunity to use their English.

The results

Sibia felt that the project had made a difference to the perception of the Centre. The outreach resulted in the Centre increasing its activity and inclusiveness. There are still fragile aspects; if the community outreach post did not exist, some groups would perhaps not continue. Young women now drop into the Centre.

Sibia also referred women to the Employment Liaison worker and to Advice Centres. Some gained jobs, and a smaller number progressed to training. Those who were not successful in getting jobs still gained confidence. Few young women were interested in volunteering at the Centre - and yet those who did were more successful in getting paid work.

The dual track achievements

Dual track can be evaluated at four levels: - the capacity of the individual, the capacity of an individual group or organisation, the capacity of a community and the capacity of service providers within that community. Should we have been talking about quadruple track all along?

I'm really a lot more confident too. To begin with I couldn't see what I was going to achieve but then when the traineeship ended and I was about to get married I could see that I had done lots of positive things in 18 months.
(Interview SK 4)

The following summaries illustrate the dual track achievements at all levels of this project. Sibia's achievements at the individual level included: completing an 18 month training programme and gaining confidence; NVQ Level 3 in Community Work; becoming an increasingly reflective practitioner; hoping to progress into Higher Education when her personal circumstances permit; recently gained a more senior job in the same community centre.

At the organisational (Centre) level the achievements were an increased capacity to provide appropriate services for young women and girls and to enable them to take part and an increased understanding of a structured approach to outreach and community work, as well as a better understanding of the importance of providing a range of opportunities both in the centre and externally.

Within the community they were challenging and changing attitudes around the aspirations and achievements of girls and young women.

The community development agency providing the training gained a closer insight into the needs of the Bangladeshi community and the opportunity to provide work there in future.

There are equally stories from all ten actions which would show different aspects of dual track.

Researching dual track

In the first project research into dual track took place at a number of levels. Firstly my role was to help practitioners define what dual track really meant, both in principle and practice. Secondly it meant working with them, discussing and observing practice, to refine that definition through which indicators would be developed. These were then used to help categorise project outcomes, evaluate the work done and to develop the next project.

Through building case studies to illustrate the process, more reflective discussions were held with practitioners on the implications of dual track and the selected indicators. The term dual track has not become widely used, nor should it, but is used by project members to describe complex aspects of their work. Discussions of a rather different nature were held with project participants. They were not aware on the whole that dual track existed and nor did I ask them about it. I discussed with them their experience of being involved in the programme and ensured that I covered what they felt they had achieved individually as well as any action they had taken within their community or family. From this I confirmed the indicators used as well as assessing to what extent they had been achieved.

Conclusions

In the second project, because of the ESF's demands for innovation, dual track was mentioned only as an influencing factor, though in fact projects frequently used the concept, as the underlying concern about employability and employment outcomes had not and has not changed. There was a requirement (set by the partnership) for local actions to include a community development approach and dual track materials were provided for all new partners. As before, it was clear that managers understood and agreed with the concept. The second project involved a greater number of community and voluntary organisations with approaches consistent with dual track. It is clear from interviews that managers again did not always succeed in conveying the rationale to workers carrying out the project. Indeed some tutors felt that they had been insufficiently consulted and informed. Closer questioning sometimes revealed a flawed understanding of the concept, again not clarified by the relevant manager. The skills, awareness and training (ranging from listening skills to project management) practitioners need for this work may form the basis of a future project.

The conclusions reached by PAT 9 on *Community Self Help* (ACU 1999) are consistent with some of the project's findings. These include the skills and knowledge needed by adult educators and other 'inclusion' professionals which were found, by the project, both locally and transnationally, to be a crucial aspect of working with people facing disadvantage.

The case study conclusions confirm that it is not necessary to be restricted by funding methodologies, as the project was able to provide a vehicle for multi-level development while still fulfilling the 'employability' criterion. It is however more difficult to achieve this using mainstream funding.

The data from the dual track projects is very rich. Future work will look in more detail at: soft outcomes revealed through dual track evaluation; the 'soft' skills practitioners need to deliver these programmes; the skills needed by practitioners from, for example, other local authority departments who to fulfil joined up working and Best Value need to engage effectively in communities; and a closer critique of the links between employment, employability and social exclusion.

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Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Sibia Khanum, whose identity is used with permission, Coventry Bangladesh Centre, Adept Community Development Agency and members of Coventry Integra Projects.

Soul inclusion: researching spirituality and adult learning.

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The advent of a new millennium has highlighted the shift of spirituality from the very heart of life to an ambiguous position on life's margins. Open and inclusive opportunities for adults to learn together about spirituality are rare. My previous SCUTREA papers have outlined the initial stages of this research into spirituality at a centre for people with cancer and their carers. This paper follows from that work but will focus on the experiences of three groups of adults who choose to reflect about spirituality together in the differing contexts of self-exploration, training and religion.

There is increasing public interest in spirituality, particularly in the areas of health, the arts and business. Yet this growing awareness does not appear to be underpinned by any clear understanding about the nature of spirituality. This situation is complicated by the inherent difficulties of speaking about something that is quintessentially individual and intangible. In the three groups this paper considers, spirituality was identified as an essentially human potential, affecting people's lives in many different ways. The most clearly identified theme in our understanding of spirituality was 'connection'; with ourselves, with others, with the environment and with transcendent values such as love. When spirituality is understood in this way it becomes an integral part of everyday life. This perspective remains important in many cultures whereas in Western culture spirituality is often ignored or isolated. In this polarised atmosphere the 'voice' of spirituality becomes lost or confused so that few people feel comfortable to explore this subject in public. Post modern culture, with its renewed interest in the intangible, challenges this perspective, opening a space to interpret spirituality differently. Interest in holistic approaches provides an opening that could help clarify and broaden traditional understandings of spirituality. The skills of adult education, particularly reflective and experiential methodologies, have much potential to create an environment where spirituality is explored with both discernment and support. As interested individuals reflect together, they venture into 'the interior castle that few explore' (St Teresa of Avilla, quoted in Delphone 1994). The remainder of this paper will explore the key lessons that have emerged from groups that have taken this opportunity.

Cooperative Inquiry Group (CI)

A group of seven women health care workers, with varying professional and personal backgrounds, volunteered to form a cooperative inquiry group focussed on spirituality. The aim of the inquiry was 'for each of us to explore our spirituality with a view to how that will inform our work'. The project was based in a community cancer care centre. The group met fifteen times over the course of a year, with the focus of our discussions gradually shifting from clarifying and developing our understanding of spirituality to considering how spiritual care could be incorporated into the work of the centre. This cooperative inquiry group marked the beginning of my research in this area and has been described more fully in a previous SCUTREA paper (White 1998).

Journey into Faith (JIF)

Another group of seven women, all loosely connected with a local Anglican church, met together for two and half hours each month for a year, starting in November 1997, with a final follow up meeting in June 1999. Meetings were informal, beginning with a shared meal and ending with five minutes of silent reflection. Again this group included individuals of different ages and working experience, despite their common church connection. Participants specifically chose an exploratory experience based approach at an introductory meeting. The aim of the group was mutual support and experience-based discussion in the broad context of the 'journey of faith' (Ball 1992)

Manchester Palliative Care Education Forum (MPaCE), Spirituality Module

This professional development course for people involved in palliative care was intended to communicate the findings of the CI group to a wider audience. The module provides an opportunity to explore the nature of spiritual care within the palliative care setting. Opportunities to integrate theory with practice and to reflect on personal experience are integral to the module, which has now been provided for twenty two people, working in hospital and community settings. The development of this module is described in a previous SCUTREA paper (White 1999).

These three groups provide the basis of the following discussion, which draws on both my own research diary and notes from each of the groups. Sharing a common focus, despite different approaches and settings, the experience of all three groups was remarkably congruent. A number of common themes emerged both in our understanding of spirituality and in the nature of the groups.

Finding Our Own Voice

Individuals within all three groups initially expressed their concern that they would not be the right sort of person for this process, fearing they would not fit in or that their ideas were not clear enough. Such concerns express well the sense of exclusion felt by many 'ordinary ' people from the process of spiritual exploration. Much depends on how spirituality is understood, but if it is seen in classic religious terms it can become the domain of an exclusive expert group with their own special language and activities. The majority, lacking theological training or religious interest, lose confidence in their ability to recognise and explore spiritual questions and their unique contribution, which would help root spirituality in a broader experience of life, is lost (Fraser 1980:12-14). Such exclusion, particularly experienced within the context of an emphasis on the material and measurable, widens the chasm between spirituality and experience. Identifying key themes in the nature of spirituality helped all three groups regain the confidence to speak about spirituality, in a sense to rediscover their own voice. As described in a previous paper (White 1999), a safe space was needed in which to explore creatively this uniquely personal and essentially intangible concept. All three groups expressed their concerns about mutual acceptance and respect for each other's ideas and these, along with listening and confidentiality, became the foundation of mutually agreed ground rules. In such a setting, especially in the groups meeting for a year, individuals were willing to struggle to put the inexpressible into words. Each of the groups described the importance of this sense of exploration, our understanding that there were no right or wrong answers but that each person's ideas, however tentative, were of value in our learning together. The rational language of concepts and ideas was experienced as an important but incomplete way of responding to this topic. Other ways of exploring spirituality included the use of metaphors, pictures and stories. 'Telling our story' was an activity in the JIF group which became unexpectedly important in all three settings (Ball 1992:48-52). Delphone describes how a life journey exercise can be used to help individuals reflect on the totality of their experience, including spirituality (Delphone 1994). Exploring life experiences through the specific lens of spirituality brought a new perspective to this process while also ensuring that our discussions were grounded in reality. To some extent this reflection on life was occurring in personal reflection between meetings but it made a hugely significant contribution to our group discussions, encouraging participants to recognise their own 'spiritual voice' and its unique contribution to this debate.

Making Connections

Spirituality as a sense of connection became a theme that was discussed extensively in all three groups. A mystical sense of oneness or connection is sometimes identified with spiritual experiences and meditation. While some group members recognised experiencing this it was a rare event and we also wished to assert a more down to earth understanding of connection akin to the Celtic recognition of the wholeness and value of all life. Connection was an important theme in our understanding of the group process as well as our view of spirituality. Working in a group strengthened our ability to make connections, not only connections *with* each other that grew stronger as we shared more deeply but also connections *for* each other as we built an intricate web of understanding about spirituality. As we listened and began to build some common understanding it was sometimes easier for another person to see connections developing between experience and ideas. All three groups recognised the catalytic effect of particular life stages, particularly facing death, because of the setting in which two of these groups occurred. The JIF group recognised the importance of such experiences but suggested that, for individuals with the opportunity and inclination, there was much to learn about spirituality apart from such crises. A theme that we returned to repeatedly was the relationship between religion and spirituality, particularly a frustration that spirituality was so often understood to be the exclusive concern of religion. Participants in all three groups, including the church-based group, talked of their own difficulty with religious structures. In contrast, spirituality was understood to be freer and more fluid yet we grew to recognise that without any structure ideas about spirituality could become inward looking and equally exclusive. While we came to understand that spirituality is potentially part of all life experience, we were conscious of the need to apply discernment in this area. It was tempting to simply place everything we didn't understand or which gave us a certain warm feeling in a stereotyped box called spirituality. Exploring our ideas with others helped us instead to tease out our underlying assumptions and reflect on how our individual ideas affected other people. Another important theme in our discussions and understanding of spirituality was that of meaning. As trust grew within the groups we were more able to discuss the ways in which we struggled to find meaning in our work and life experience, particularly where it concerned suffering and reconciliation. Talking together revealed starkly that meaning is complex and many layered, often multiple and sometimes contradictory (Usher 1993:172). While journey remained a key metaphor for both spirituality and the progress of groups, we were increasingly concerned to stress the non-linear and exploratory nature of this process.

Learning Together

While spirituality was understood to be very personal and individual, all three groups valued highly the collective nature of these learning experiences. Time and energy spent articulating our ideas about spirituality in a group challenged us all, both individually and corporately. The group provided a wider range of ideas and experiences, forcing us to see things through other people's eyes and thereby challenging our own opinions. While all group members valued the exploratory nature of our approach, some particularly struggled with the sense that there may not be answers to our questions. Indeed most of us struggled with this at some point, desiring the comfort and security of certainty, though we recognised that we were unlikely to be able to hold such certainties with integrity. In the area of spiritual care particularly we expressed our longing for a formula that would make this easier to provide rather than have to struggle alongside clients in need. The tension between the desire to find answers and to keep exploring intensified in the longer running groups, sometimes leading to painful confrontations. Meeting regularly over a prolonged period helped our ideas grow and develop, creating an environment where we could begin to face these differences and the challenges they brought. Aware of the tendency to separate spirituality from everyday life, groups consciously emphasised the integration of spirituality into our life and work. This is unusual in church-based groups, where work is often ignored, and in work-based groups where spirituality is often ignored. Heron suggests that validity in human research comes from the quality of being well founded, emphasising particularly the foundation on experience (Heron 1988:40). Only the CI group was a specific research setting but all three groups shared this emphasis on experience. Reflecting on experience can be painful and is undoubtedly demanding, while a group dimension brings further challenges. Sometimes it was more comfortable to theorise than confront our experiences but the groups both challenged and supported those who chose to do so. Each group grew to recognise the benefit of grounding our discussions in the totality of life experiences, from the everyday to the profound. Hence in the MPaCE group, a participant would raise their concerns about a particular client, moving seamlessly from the difficulties with medication to their own struggle to cope with this person's pain. Similarly in the JIF group, a participant could talk about their family, moving from the challenges of parenting to what they had learnt about God through these experiences. Perhaps this is part of the unique contribution of ordinary people, rather than so called experts, which thereby creates a more complete picture. The very experience of talking about spirituality in this way challenges the assumption that spirituality is essentially exclusive. At best exploring spirituality together challenged us to see beyond superficial labels, listening to ourselves and each other at a deep level. Such listening was never easy. Where similar ideas were expressed in very different ways we had to reach beyond the words to find the underlying meaning in what people were saying. Where very different and strongly held ideas were expressed, in whatever way, we had to grapple with the reality of our ground rules, continuing to respect each other despite these differences. Exploring this very personal issue, particularly in a public way, was risky, perhaps even more than we had realised at the start. Participants were free to choose how much of themselves to reveal but such risk taking was more apparent in the long running groups, particularly the CI group where there was the widest range of opinions.

The Holistic Approach

Reason suggests that the purpose of all human inquiry is to heal (or make whole) the fragmentation and division that so characterises modern life. He links 'wholeness' with 'holiness' suggesting that a greater awareness of the world as sacred is an essential part of the participatory approach (Reason 1994:10). The understanding of spirituality reached in all three groups was very much concerned with health and well being, for our clients but also ourselves. Benson identifies spirituality as an essential part of self-care, helping people cope with the stress of modern living in a way that is health promoting (Benson 1996:22-23). Simply attending to our own individual spirituality was recognised as an important and unusual element of the groups. Only the JIF group included any corporate spiritual observance but participants in the other groups described how they had become more aware of ways in which spirituality could be nurtured in their own lives, such as meditation, creative activities and prayer. In a sense our very integrated approach militates against specific, separate spiritual activities yet without specific opportunities to recognise and nurture spirituality it can easily be neglected. Relationships, connections with others, were seen as important in our thinking about spirituality. The groups, by the very nature and depth of their discussions, created strong bonds between participants. This was true of all the groups, although again it was more marked in the CI and JIF groups where time allowed the development of greater trust and mutual support. Yet the nature of all three groups was specifically to learn together; participants had contracted to learn together about spirituality, albeit in a personal and experiential way. Mutual support was an important element in this process but this was essentially to underpin our learning ,never the primary purpose of the group. Self-exploration and group learning became intertwined and at times the boundaries between personal development and adult learning seemed to blur. Individuals within each of the groups undoubtedly had the skills to provide mutual counselling yet we chose to retain and clarify our emphasis on learning together. Cooperative inquiry recognises clearly that deep feelings raised during the course of an inquiry cannot be ignored and indeed have a profound effect on the life of the group. Specific ways of responding to such tensions can be built into the methodology and it helped the CI group that this was recognised from the beginning (Heron 1996:69-72). However in the more informal JIF group the process was less clear cut; deep feelings were undoubtedly raised but only sometimes expressed or responded to in group meetings; a deep sense of mutual support developed yet participants rarely saw each other between meetings. It would not be possible for me or anyone else to know all the ways in which these groups affected individuals' lives. Although we discussed what we had learnt in each group, I sense that the full effect will only be recognised as our learning becomes even more fully integrated into our life and work.

The Role of the Facilitator

Facilitating all three groups, each with different expectations of that role, was a daunting prospect compounded by my research project becoming increasingly bound up with these particular activities. In cooperative inquiry there is a recognised tension between the separate role of the facilitator and cooperative nature of the inquiry (Reason 1988:30-32). My research diary describes my concerns about my own research agenda influencing the process of the group. My own desire that the groups 'perform' became focussed around the need to maintain a pattern of regular meetings. In the CI group particularly I was conscious of the demands placed on individual participants by the methodology and reluctant to stress these too much. People had volunteered to take part but I was never confident, perhaps wrongly, that other people could become as entranced by the whole subject as I was. As the CI group reviewed its aims and progress at a difficult half way point, I became acutely conscious that the whole enterprise might collapse leaving me with little to show for two years work, yet if this was what the group wanted then it had to be their choice. Another concern was the pressure, from myself as well as other participants, to have clear answers about both the process and the subject. Preparing for this research I had been reflecting on these topics for some time, yet as we discussed it in the groups I was as conscious as other group members that I had more questions than answers. I was able to see recurring themes and connections in our discussions but so could other participants. Greater involvement sometimes helped this process but not always and I felt a deep discomfort about being seen as an expert. Shortage of time and a full curriculum made it tempting to return to a more didactic teaching style when we planned the MPaCE module. However, experience in other groups encouraged us to retain a more reflective and exploratory style, an approach appreciated by the participants. My aim in all three groups, seen most clearly in the CI group, was for all the participants to contribute and to work as equals. Although this aim was broadly met, I remain unsure whether it is truly possible for the facilitator to be an equal member of the group. I recognise how much my own ideas about spirituality and how I express them have changed during this process. Like other participants I grew more confident in recognising and articulating my ideas about spirituality, more able to set my own ideas and experiences into a wider framework. I am far more conscious that spirituality is entwined throughout the whole of my life; indeed it sometime seems difficult to get away from it, although I am told that is a common experience for researchers whatever the topic!

Conclusions

Although spirituality is referred to increasingly there is little clarity about what it entails. The experiences of the groups described above suggest that inclusive opportunities to explore spirituality with others are of value in the context of modern living, particularly where life experience has provided a catalyst for spiritual reflection. The principles of adult education could play a vital role in ensuring that such opportunities are both inclusive and enriching.

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Inclusiveness for whom? The relevance of creating a demand for ICT based adult learning

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Introduction

For the last decade the UK government's drive to establish a 'Learning Society' has been centred upon notions of inclusion. Thus it is acknowledged that the creation of a Learning Society depends upon *widening* and not just increasing participation in lifelong learning. Academic and policy-makers are in general agreement about who is currently excluded from participation, and therefore who the policies of inclusion should be aimed at. These policies have tended to be concerned with removing the barriers that prevent these specific groups of the population from participating in learning. Moreover, in this quest to facilitate easier access to lifelong learning for *all*, policy makers are increasingly turning to Information and Communications Technology (ICT). It is envisaged that by providing a flexible alternative to more traditional forms of education and training, ICT can provide a means of overcoming existing barriers to participation, particularly barriers of 'time, space and pace' (Essom and Thomson 1999). We have argued elsewhere that, to a large extent, these hopes are unfounded at present, with inequalities of access to ICT reinforcing rather than ameliorating these existing barriers (Selwyn & Gorard 1999, Gorard & Selwyn 1999). In this paper we move on to consider a potentially more significant flaw in this approach stemming from the 'demand', rather than the 'supply' side of the equation.

Using early findings from two studies carried out in Cardiff (one funded by the Spencer Foundation and one by the ESRC), this paper will express the concern that ICT is being treated, both by the government and some educators, as a 'magic button' for the answer to the problems of social inclusion in lifelong learning. However, our emerging evidence suggests that this is not the case, as such an approach ignores the role of demand. The paper will therefore examine the problems inherent in any initiative that attempts to widen participation in adult learning by instituting changes on the supply side alone.

The supply side of ICT based adult learning - what's on offer?

There are a number of different programmes designed to provide technology based learning to all sectors of society, including the University for Industry (UfI) and its 'learndirect' brand-name, the People's Network of libraries, the National Grid for Learning, and various 'digital' and 'virtual' colleges. Most recently, organisations such as the BBC and NIACE have been active in staging campaigns to promote both the use of ICT and adult learning and it has been announced that up to 1000 ICT Learning Centres will be opened across the country by 2001. Against this UK-wide 'policy-scape', in Wales the Digital College (or Coleg Digidol) is also being introduced as a technologically based centre for adult learning which emphasises extending learning opportunities through digital television broadcasts and the Internet. Like other similar initiatives, widening participation is one of its chief aims:

Anyone interested in learning new skills – vocational or non-vocational would be able to benefit and exciting and effective access procedures would be put in place to attract and support traditionally non-participating *groups such as the young unemployed and adult returners.* (Digital College 1998, p.15)

It is monitoring the development of the Digital College, and its success in widening participation, that is at the heart of our on-going project. Our research is concerned with examining not only the demand for the digital college, but also the techniques employed by the digital college in order to attract non-participants. We will turn to this research at a later point in the discussion. First, however we need to consider why the demand side of the equation is so important.

The need to bring demand back into the adult learning equation

In addition to being ICT based providers of learning opportunities, initiatives such as the Digital College and UfI have something else in common – they are all supply led initiatives. In this way they have all been established on the assumption that providing easy access to learning opportunities away from the confines of traditional educational institutions would open up learning resources to all sectors of society; effectively leading to greater social inclusion. However, recent work suggests that the role of technical barriers to participation in adult learning is far more complex than this approach would suggest (Gorard *et al.* 1999a, 1999b). Above all, this approach neglects another key barrier which also prevents people from engaging with learning opportunities – dispositional (or motivational) barriers. If the problem is based upon people not wanting to participate then it is difficult to envisage how these supply led schemes are going to be successful in terms of widening participation. If particular individuals are not well disposed towards the notion of 'learning' then removing other more tangible barriers such as cost and so on will have very limited effect (Gorard & Selwyn 1999). As barriers of any kind are, by definition, more effective against the less motivated, it is not clear how merely making changes on the *supply* side will tackle this significant barrier. It can be strongly argued, therefore, that in order for these schemes to succeed, it is not enough to simply *supply* new and innovative learning opportunities, there must also be a *demand* for them.

It is significant that in a recent debate on the Information Age at the National Assembly for Wales, one assembly member commented that providing the equipment and facilities to all members of society was the 'easy bit'. Putting the necessary infrastructure into place and ensuring that everyone in the population has access to the necessary facilities, despite being in itself a tall order, is arguably a minor obstacle in comparison to the major challenge of stimulating demand and motivation. In a similar vein, with specific regard to the University for Industry, Robertson (1998, p.10) argued:

Government interventions of an institutional nature have not made much impression hitherto on the intractable problem of demand side resistance to training in the UK. The terrain is littered with the burned-out remnants of doomed supply-side initiatives.

Using examples from earlier supply-side interventions, Robertson contends that little has been learned from past failures and that for such initiatives to work, the problem of 'demand side resistance to training' and education must be tackled. He further argues that '[a] combination of structural and cultural inhibitors has produced in the UK a familiar pattern of limited individual motivation, provider inertia and lack of responsiveness' (Robertson 1998, p.14)

Demand side resistance - the centrality of learner identity

There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that such dispositional and motivational barriers are, at present, as much of a hurdle to the establishment of a learning society as structural and institutional barriers. Recent studies into lifelong learning point to the importance of learner identities as a determinant of participation (Edwards *et al.* 1993, Titmus 1994, Gorard *et al.* 1998). With this in mind, this section of the paper will explore the possible reasons for this 'limited individual motivation' using interview data from the recently completed Cardiff-based ESRC funded study into lifelong learning [1].

Rees *et al.* (2000:11) argue that decisions about whether or not to participate in post compulsory education tend to reflect 'deep-seated attitudes towards learning in formal settings, such as educational institutions and work places'. In this respect, moves to provide ICT based learning opportunities away from these formal educational settings might prove to be beneficial. However individuals' learner identities could be more complex than this centring upon notions of whether or not learning or training is relevant to them. Of course this aspect of learner identity can also be linked to early experiences of participation in education. There is evidence to suggest that an individual's relative success or failure at school has a significant effect on learner identity, with those who fail frequently coming to see learning as irrelevant (Rees *et al.* 1997, 2000). For example, when asked whether or not they had considered participating in any form of adult learning, one non-participant replied that he had not because:

I'm not brainy I suppose .. Well I never looked to be honest.

This quotation illustrates not only that the individual had a negative learner identity, he is not *'brainy'* enough to participate, but also that he has not considered that participating in any form of post compulsory education is relevant to him, '*well I never looked to be honest'*.

Fevre *et al.* (1999) argue that among sections of the population there is a common tendency to devalue formal education and training. For example:

I haven't got a GCE or BSc or whatever they're called these days .. but as I say you don't have to be academic to be able to do things.

For many it is common sense and experience, rather than formal education and training, that is seen as central to carrying out one's job effectively. As such, many non-participants were at a loss to understand how participating in education could benefit them. The following is a particularly telling example of this, specifically the respondent's comment that education *'is still a waste of time as far as I'm concerned'.* This comment suggests that the respondent has always felt education to be an irrelevant option for him.

...you asked me about getting education .. which I think would be a foolish thing for me to do really ... It's still a waste of time as far as I'm concerned. You see them on the news like that woman of 70 or 80 getting a degree or something. What for, like? She has wasted hours .. to go and do something like that at her age is a complete waste of a couple of years of her life.

For those who do not have jobs, education and training is also frequently dismissed as irrelevant. For example one young unemployed man in his early twenties commented, *'basically I need work before I need college'.* However it is significant that the relevance of lifelong learning was also questioned by some of those still in full time continuous education. Although participating in immediate post compulsory education might be relevant in terms of helping them to secure employment upon leaving, its value after this point was frequently questioned. For example one undergraduate student, when asked whether she would continue with learning after completing her present studies responded:

Probably not .. I like studying but I don't like it that much! [laughs] ***Not to be doing it eternally*** *but for the time being it's fine, yeah.* (emphasis added)

This final comment also lends further support to the central question of this paper – that is; if people do not want to participate, whether this is because they feel that they would not benefit or because they feel that it is simply not a suitable option, how will supply-led initiatives help? In particular, how will ICT based schemes fare given the further barrier associated with the actual use of the technology itself. We have seen how individuals characterise adult learning as not for them, it remains to be seen whether the same people are convinced by the value and relevance of ICT. In the next section of this paper we shall discuss the strategies employed by one of these ICT based initiatives, the Wales Digital College, to attract and recruit learners.

The Wales Digital College – Strategies for recruiting learners through ICT

The Wales Digital College is an ICT based broker and provider of learning opportunities with the aim of widening participation in adult learning through *'the use of exciting and effective access procedures'* (Digital College 1998, p.15). As participation figures are not yet available we are unable, at present, to test empirically whether or not this goal has been achieved. However we have argued elsewhere that the way in which the Digital College presents itself to potential learners is of vital importance to its success (Gorard *et al.* 2000). This section will therefore examine current strategies to recruit learners along with a brief analysis of the facilities currently offered by the Digital College. This will allow us to make some tentative comments regarding the *likely* success of their aims to widen participation.

Publicity for the Digital College has been remarkably low-key. Despite its commitment to 'driving demand' (Digital College 1998) there has not yet been a high profile marketing campaign akin to the campaign surrounding the launch of the Ufi pilot in the North East of England (Milner et al. 1999). Of course, this may be explained, in part, by the fact that the 'official' launch date of the Digital College has been consistently rescheduled from its original target of mid 1999. Indeed, respondents have reported a certain degree of uncertainty among the staff of the digital college itself as to when it will be fully operational, although it is generally anticipated that it will now not be before Autumn 2000. Nevertheless, to date the Digital College has utilised three main ways of raising its public profile and beginning to recruit learners: the staging of a conference in early 1999; the production of a promotional leaflet; and the launch of its on-line presence on the Internet.

The two-day Digital College Conference in January 1999 saw the launch of the public face of the Digital College. It is not without significance then that the main focus of this conference was ostensibly upon building links with the business community. Indeed, the conference's title 'Wales Digital College *Network* – The Conference' (emphasis added) reflects this. The conference was opened with an address by Professor Bob Fryer, chairman of NAGCELL and executive director of the UfI, who stressed that concerns to widen participation in lifelong learning should remain at the heart of the Digital College project:

We cannot be seen to merely attract the usual suspects, to do so would be deeply hypocritical. (Fryer 1999)

However even in terms of the conference itself, these concerns largely remained at the level of rhetoric. The remainder of the conference was concerned with the business of running a digital college and little further reference was made to issues of widening participation. In the numerous discussions and seminars on the practical day-to-day running of the Digital College few attempts were made to discuss how the goal of widening participation might be translated into practice. It was apparent throughout that the conference was essentially a public relations exercise in which the Digital College was chiefly concerned with marketing themselves towards business. Two other things stood out. First of all the Welsh language slant of the conference was striking, as was the strong emphasis on the importance of increasing business oriented skills throughout Wales. It is significant that the focus was upon increasing productivity and promoting economic growth in Wales, whereas arguments for widening participation in terms of promoting greater equity and social justice were neglected.

A more sustained 'public face' of the Digital College has been provided through the Internet. Although digital broadcasting will eventually form the backbone of the Digital College, most initial development has focused upon the use of the Internet. At present, along with making telephone enquiries to the Digital College, visiting their website via the Internet is the principal way in which a potential user may engage with the Digital College. However, as yet neither of these may be particularly effective means of recruiting disaffected learners or new users. Several informants expressed their frustration when telephone enquiries proved to be far from enlightening. The receptionist was unable to answer even the most basic questions about the most basic functions and purpose of the Digital College, such as what courses it 'offered' and how to enrol on them. It also transpires that the Digital College is currently catering for Welsh language learners alone.

The Welsh language emphasis is also evident on the Digital College's website, where the only resources currently available are for Welsh language. We have argued elsewhere that this emphasis on Welsh language learning could be seen as an attempt to provide content for which a ready audience, and therefore *demand*, is known to exist (Gorard *et al.* 2000). However despite the (rather limited) provision of Welsh language resources, the Digital College's website is primarily concerned with administrative matters. Much of the website is password protected and is presently concerned with the day to day running of the Digital College rather than stimulating demand for lifelong learning. It is significant that the two dominant features of the Digital College conference – a concern with the 'business' side of the college and with Welsh language provision – is also clearly reflected on its website.

The third strategy employed by the Digital College to recruit potential users has been a promotional leafleting campaign. However in terms of stimulating demand, the appropriateness of this method is also questionable. To begin with, the leaflet has been largely dispatched to those individuals who have made initial enquiries to the Digital College, whether via a telephone call or the Internet; in other words individuals who are already 'switched on' to the idea of participating in ICT based learning. Secondly the leaflet, which is produced in association with the NTL telecommunications company, is more concerned with promoting the *technology* rather than lifelong learning. It is also worth noting that photographs on the leaflet depict various individuals and families engaging with digital learning in plush homes with oak mantle fire surrounds and thousands of pounds worth of audio and visual equipment clearly on display.

In sum, it is not easy to see how the current strategies employed by the Digital College will stimulate demand. It is noteworthy then that they have recently commissioned a market research company to investigate the current demand for the facilities that it intends to offer. This of course, is a positive move as it reveals that the significance of demand for ICT based learning has at least been recognised. However this investigation into the demand for the Digital College is also framed in a very 'supply side' way.

Rather than considering how demand might be stimulated, it is concerned with tapping into the *existing* demand and with monitoring what the demand might be for the services that the institution intends to *supply*. In addition, the market research is currently concentrating on the readers of a magazine aimed at learners of the Welsh language, students at a further education college in Mid Wales and to Young Farmers groups throughout Wales. Two of these groups are already 'learners' by definition.

Conclusions

One of the emerging themes from our on-going work into the Welsh Digital College is that, despite all the hyperbole surrounding the use of ICT in adult learning, the practical implementation of such programmes is proving more haphazard. The ever-changing 'official' launch date is testimony to this and means that, as yet, we have been unable to obtain data on the users of the digital college. This will form the next stage of our research. Nevertheless, our initial observations coupled with our earlier ESRC-funded research would suggest that learner demand is unlikely to be significantly altered without a fundamental shift in individual, and indeed cultural, attitudes towards the value of learning. Thus, in light of the observations made in this paper the Digital College's goal of widening participation in adult learning in Wales appears, at least in the short term, to be a tall order.

Crucially, given the centrality of the problem of demand-side resistance to adult learning, if the Wales Digital College and similar initiatives *are* to succeed, this demand side problem must be tackled. Indeed, there are signs that the importance of creating demand is beginning to be recognised now that the initial rush of technological enthusiasm is dying down. In the Third National Report of the National Skills Task Force one of the recommendations was that the 'promotion and encouragement of lifelong learning should be greatly increased' particularly in terms of 'individuals who could most benefit from learning but are reluctant to become involved'. (NSTF 2000, p.7)

Nevertheless, relying on 'innovative' means to stimulate demand as at present can only ever tackle problem in small way; it is apparent that individual learner identities run much deeper than this and the culture of non-participation needs to be tackled on a wider scale. At the moment, the introduction of ICT-based programmes would not seem capable of (or even specifically focused on) solving this problem. To expect a wide-scale technological fix to the issue of educational inclusiveness would, therefore, appear foolhardy. The establishment of a fully inclusive learning society cannot simply depend upon finding a 'magic button', or a technical fix but needs to be approached in a broader, more comprehensive way by policymakers and educationalists alike.

Endnote

1 - The data presented in this section were collected as part of research carried out as part of the ESRC's Learning Society Programme (grant L123251041). The remainder of the paper also draws on an on-going project made possible by a grant from the Spencer Foundation (SG#199900305). The statements made and the views expressed are solely the responsibility of the authors

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Getting in and getting on: the experiences and outcomes of Access students entering Higher Education, in contrast with students entering with no formal academic qualifications.

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Introduction.

The motivations behind this paper can be found in my own experiences of applying for a place in higher education in 1986. I applied to two Universities, and two Polytechnics, all of whose prospectuses had carried the message that applications from mature people, without formal entry qualifications, would be welcomed. As someone falling within this category, I decided to take advantage of these offers, with the intent of saving the time normally spent undertaking an Access or Foundation course. One University rejected my offer without the benefit of an interview; however, following interviews at the other institutions, I was offered unconditional places at the remaining University, and one of the Polytechnics. The second Polytechnic would accept me only after my successful completion of an Access course. During what became a contentious interview, when it was suggested that I needed some preparation before I could be accepted, I asked why and, as far as I was concerned, was not given a satisfactory answer. The interviewers (both now my colleagues, though they do not remember me from the interview) informed me that I would benefit from undertaking some preparatory study. Choosing not to take this advice I went instead to the University offering me the unconditional place, thus saving myself a year.

The creation of Access and Foundation courses, as the 'third recognised route' (Jones 1992) into HE, with their integral components of 'study skills' proved popular with admissions tutors, to the extent that entry through these routes became the norm for mature applicants. Evidence of this popularity can be seen in my experience outlined above. Due to their popularity with admissions tutors and mature students alike, these routes have become the standard method of entry for those over the age of 21, to the point where individuals matriculating in this way have lost their 'non-standard' characterisation. This is a description now better suited to those adults applying directly to universities, with no formal entry requirements. Much has been written about adult students entering through this 'third route': their achievements in comparison to A-level entrants; their problems and experiences etc. (Richardson, 1994: Osbourne, Leopold & Ferrie, 1997: Simonite, 1997) Little, however, has been written about the efficacy of the Access/Foundation courses in their prescribed task of preparing adults for entry into HE - especially as set against 'non-standard' applicants who apply directly to university through what Jones (1992) describes as the 'flexible entry route'.

Since becoming an admissions tutor, faced with applications from people very much like myself, I have often reflected on these circumstances and wondered if I would have benefited from preparatory study, or whether a preparatory year would have been time wasted. Perhaps because of my previous experiences, I have tended to give 'flexible entry' applicants the benefit of the doubt regarding their preparedness for higher education, as a result of which, the degree for which I am responsible has recruited a considerable number of adults with no formal academic qualifications. The content of the course is such that it attracts mature applicants generally, with the consequence that over 80% of graduates and current students are categorised as mature. The make up of this student body is such that it provides the opportunity to test the efficacy of Access/Foundation courses, through the performance and experiences of students entering higher education though those routes, in contrast with the performance and experience of those entering through the 'flexible entry' route.

The paper will argue that preparation for higher education through approved Access/Foundation courses is of academic advantage to those taking them, providing a head start over those entering HE directly with no formal academic qualifications, though that advantage is lost by graduation. It will go on to argue that despite the apparent success of Access/Foundation courses in preparing students for HE, significant numbers of those students do not feel adequately prepared for this level of study. Finally, it will argue that those adults choosing entry through Access/Foundation courses find the application process significantly more stressful than direct entry students. For the purposes of simplification, students entering HE through Access or Foundation courses will be identified as A/F students; direct entry students will be identified as DE students.

Contrasting academic performance.

In order to contrast the academic performance of the two categories of students, the records of 144 mature graduates were examined. Of this group 112 were A/F students and 32 were DE students. Of the 112 A/F students, 53 (47%) had increased their marks between year 1 and their aggregated marks for years 2 and 3: the lowest increase being 1%, and the highest 9%. The average increase of this group was 3.1% (SD 1.98). Of these, 31 (28%) had improved their grade by at least one classification over the three years. Again, 53 (47%) had experienced a decrease in marks, the least being 1%, the highest 17%. The average decrease of this group was 4.5% (SD 3.69). Of these 17 (15%) suffered a reduction in grade, by at least one classification over the three years. The remaining 5 students (5%) had scored the same across all three years. The overall average mark for year one for the whole group was 58%, with the same average for all three years.

Of the 32 DE students, 25 (78%) increased their marks between year 1 and their aggregated marks for years 2 and 3: the lowest increase being 1%, and the highest 18%. The average increase of this group was 6.5% (SD 4.5). Of these, 15 (46%) improved their grade by at least one classification over the three years. Of the remainder, 5 (16%) had experienced a decrease in marks: the lowest decrease being 1%, and the highest 5%. The average decrease of this group was 3.2% (SD 1.4). Of these, 2 (6%) suffered a reduction in grade, by at least one classification, over the three years. The final 2 students (6%) scored the same marks across all three years. The overall average mark for year one for this group was 56%, increasing to 59% in year three.

What can we take from these figures? As the findings are based on a relatively small group of students they can not claim to be representative, however they do provide cause for reflection. The DE students show significant improvement across the three years: 78% had increased their marks, at an average of 6.5% per student, with 46% improving by at least one classification. This is in contrast with A/F students whose improvement was less marked: 46% had increased their mark, at an average of 3.1%, with 28% improving by at least one classification. The contrast between students whose marks decreased is also marked: of the DE group, 16% suffered a reduction in marks, at an average of 3.2% per student, with 6% dropping at least one classification. Of the A/F students, 47% experienced a reduction in marks, at an average of 4.5% per student, with 15% dropping at least one classification.

It would be easy to place too much significance on these figures. For one thing there are too many variables to mention here that will have affected these results. For another, if the final aggregate marks of both groups are compared, we find little difference: DE students had a final average of 58.8%; the A/F students final average was 58.4%.

My reading of these results suggests that, for the DE students, the first year of their degree course represented a foundation year, providing the skills that allowed them to catch up to those students entering through the Access/Foundation route. If this is the case then admissions tutors should be more amenable to mature students seeking to save time by entering directly into HE without the benefit of a foundation year. This does not mean that Access/Foundation courses should not continue to be the central route into HE for mature students. If DE students were able to improve to the extent that they did, how much more might they have achieved, had they taken advantage of an Access/Foundation course? The following data suggests that Access/Foundation courses do provide an excellent preparation for HE.

First Class Honours	3 (3%)
Upper Second Class Honours	66 (59%)
Lower Second Class Honours	38 (34%)
Third Class Honours	5 (5%)

This is in contrast to the DE students:

First Class Honours	2 (6%)
Upper Second Class Honours	12 (37%)
Lower Second Class Honours	18 (56%)

We can see that of those with the benefit of an Access/Foundation year, 62% gained Upper Second Class Honours or above, in contrast to the DE students of whom 43% achieved the same grades, a significant difference. Taken together (First and Upper Second = 58%) these results contrast well with those offered by Roderick, Bell & Hamilton (1982) (First and Upper Second 26%).

Experience of admission procedures.

To discover any experiential differences between the two groups of students of the admissions procedures, the study group was widened to include current mature students. This increased the group from 144 to 170, with 131 A/F students and 39 DE students. Questionnaires were distributed, and of the 170, 67 were returned, a response rate of 40%. Of these 67 responses 47 (70%) were A/F students, and 20 (30%) were DE students. The questionnaires were designed to elicit information on the areas outlined below.

Preparedness for university.

The primary function of all Access and Foundation courses is to prepare students for study at degree level. It is what they were designed to do, and is the reason they are recognised as the 'third way' into HE, and why admission tutors rely so heavily on them for assessing applications from mature students. Of the A/F respondents 31 (66%) felt they were adequately prepared, 16 (34%) did not. Given the figures discussed above, this apparent lack of preparedness of a significant number of A/F students is misplaced, as these courses appear to be achieving their stated ambitions. Similar misconceptions appear to exist within the DE group, where 13 (65%) felt they were adequately prepared for this level of study and 5 (35%) did not. Again, the figures would suggest that these views are a misconception. That the two data sets are similar may be more indicative of the confidence levels within the respondents generally, rather than an accurate assessment of preparedness.

Stress with application process.

Access/Foundation courses, as well as being charged with providing an academic grounding in a range of subject areas, preparing students for the intellectual rigors of HE, also provide advice and support in gaining a place at university. This mainly takes the form of advising on the completion of the UCAS form, and in preparing applicants for interview. The experience of the admissions procedure was a concern for a number of applicants, and again a significant difference exists between the A/F students and the DE students. Of the A/F students 27 (57%) reported feeling stressed by the experience, in contrast to 5 (25%) of the DE students. The causes of this stress ranged across difficulties with the application form, advice given by their FE institutions, and their experience of interviews.

The literature suggests that A/F students should be advantaged in the area of applications as FE tutors are well placed to offer advice and counselling, with many arranging visits to HE Institutions (Chiswick, 1991: Cody, 1991). The findings of this research would suggest that the provision of advice is by no means universal, as 7 (15%) students reported that none had been provided.

One cause of this stress is the timing of the application process, with a mid-December deadline. Course selection, and the completion of application forms, must begin close to the start of the Access/Foundation courses and these students believe the speed with which the process begins leaves little time for considered or rational decisions in the choice of course. Consequently, the advice offered by FE tutors tended to be procedural, rather than on course selection. One student commented that *it was more stressful because I was older, the UCAS form had to be in at the start of college, and I found that difficult as I felt that I had no writing skills.*

Tutors, waiting until the last moment to complete references, also cause anxiety, giving themselves time to assess some of the student's work to enable an accurate reference to be given. As the deadline approached some students reported increased stress, exacerbated by the belief among some of them that the application process is of a 'first come first served' nature, with early application seen as advantageous. While this would be denied by all involved, there remains an, often un-stated, awareness that for some of the more heavily subscribed, occupational courses, this may well be the case.

Undoubtedly, the main case of stress is the personal statement. Great emphasis is placed upon this by FE tutors in the belief that mature students have to get themselves 'noticed', in order to gain an invitation to attend for interview, at which they can sell themselves. All of those reporting stress in the application process were at pains to emphasise this. Typically: *we were told that if we got it wrong, we had blown our chances.* These pressures are placed on A/F students because, with Access and foundation courses specifically designed to prepare individuals for entry to HE, their success or failure will be judged, not simply on their pass rates, but by the numbers of their students who subsequently gain entry to HE. FE tutors are stressed by the need to ensure that applicants maximise their chances of gaining a place in HE. Consequently, importance is given to filling the UCAS form in correctly, especially in getting the personal statement right, increasing the stresses on the applicants.

Those A/F students not feeling stressed by the application process gave two reasons for the ease of the process. Firstly, they felt the support and advice they received from the FE tutors removed the stress from the process. Secondly, of the 20 not reporting stress, 7 had entered FE with a specific HE course and institution in mind, thus removing the anxiety over choice of course.

Of the DE students experiencing stress, this was caused by the interview, as they saw this as the main barrier to entry. None felt stressed by the application form, seeing it as an expected part of the process. It should also be noted that these DE applicants were not subject to the advice and urgings of the tutors in the FE institutions. The fact that they felt able to apply for direct entry may be representative of a more general confidence than experienced by their peers who chose to spend a year in FE to prepare themselves for HE. Most DE students found the procedure non-stressful, typical was the comment *apart from doubts about my own ability, the whole process was straightforward.* The main problem reported by the DE students was the early application date. Many of them believed that application for a place on an undergraduate degree was much like signing up for an evening class; a course that one could apply for a place as late as the month before commencement.

Conclusion.

We can see from the evidence of this research that Access and Foundation courses have an important role to play in the process of increasing access to higher education. Like everything in life, including the Curate's egg, they are good in parts. These courses prepare students well for the academic rigors of higher education, but in doing so, they can increase the stresses on the people they were designed to help. However, the main concern with this paper is to explore the idea that direct entry into higher education is a viable option, and one that should be at least considered by admission tutors. Despite the advantages of Access/Foundation course, advantages underpinned by the findings of this research, there remains a need to consider direct entry into higher education for students with no recognised academic qualifications. This is especially so today, as the new funding arrangements make it increasingly difficult for adults to seriously consider re-entering education. The numbers of mature applicants are falling, and the prospect of four years out of employment, the time it takes to complete an Access course and a degree, may be too long for many mature individuals to contemplate. The opportunity of direct entry, reducing the time taken to complete a degree course by one year, may be a price more will be willing to pay. This paper is proof, if it were needed, that not all mature students require a foundation year to do well in HE.

The problem is now such that, as Access and Foundation courses have become central to the process or returning adults to education, the system designed to increase access has itself become a barrier (Jones: 1992). Some admission tutors, like my colleagues who interviewed me, see the Access and Foundation courses as a way of avoiding difficult choices. The development of such courses has made it easy for some admission tutors to abrogate their responsibility by providing them with a mechanism for screening mature candidates, and as a consequence, temporarily excluding those individuals who feel themselves capable of direct entry to university. No one would deny that some of these decisions are difficult, but it must be recognised that direct entry applicants have also been faced with difficult decisions, decisions that will not have been made lightly. It is therefore imperative that these individuals should have their applications fully considered, and that all decisions should be made on the grounds of merit, rather that expediency.

Some of the more enlightened institutions and tutors have devised their own ad hoc procedures to test the 'fitness' of the candidate (Roderick, Bell & Hamilton: 1982). The tutors involved in selection for this particular course have developed their own procedures, based upon an in-depth interview with two tutors, at which each applicant's 'fitness' is assessed. There is no denying that this is a difficult process, one that is not entered in lightly, as it is easy to set people up to fail. There is no prescriptive methodology to be offered for this process, and the decisions are based on individual judgements, backed up by experience. Mature students with no academic qualifications are actively encouraged to apply for direct entry to this course, and the results that we have experienced from direct entry students have greatly encouraged us in this. By making direct entry a tool of inclusion, rather than an excuse for temporary exclusion, we have challenged the myth that higher education should only be available to an academically well prepared minority.

Finally, the dichotomy between widening access and improving quality (or perhaps between widening access and maintaining an elitist system) may be a false one. Babbage and Leyton (1993) make the point that enhancing quality in HE may be better served by selecting students on qualitative grounds rather than administrative convenience. Given my own background, it will come as no surprise that I fully support this view.

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